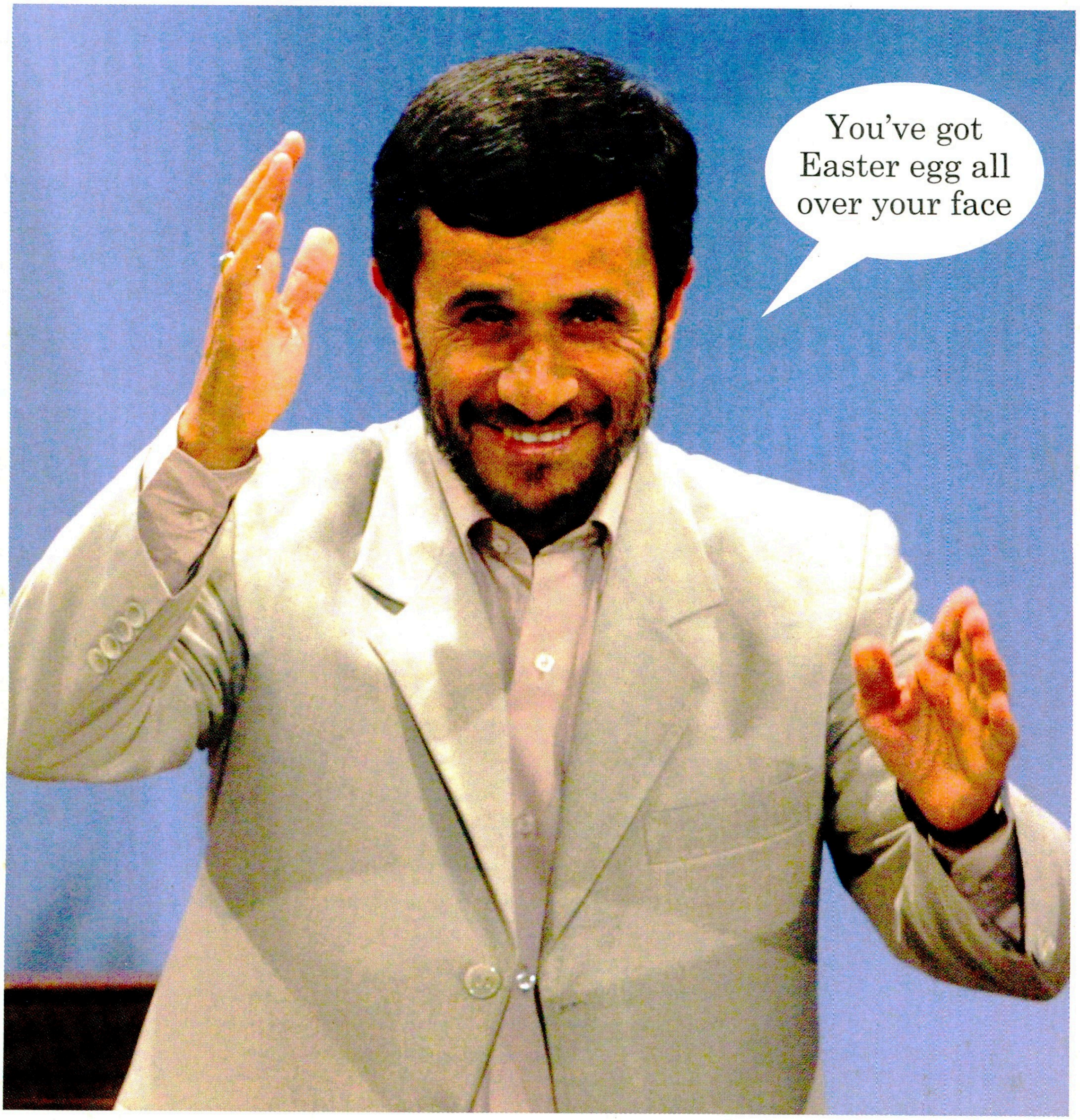
No. 1182
13 April –
26 April 2007
£1.50

PRIVATE EYE

IRANIAN PRESIDENT SENDS BRITAIN SEASONAL MESSAGE



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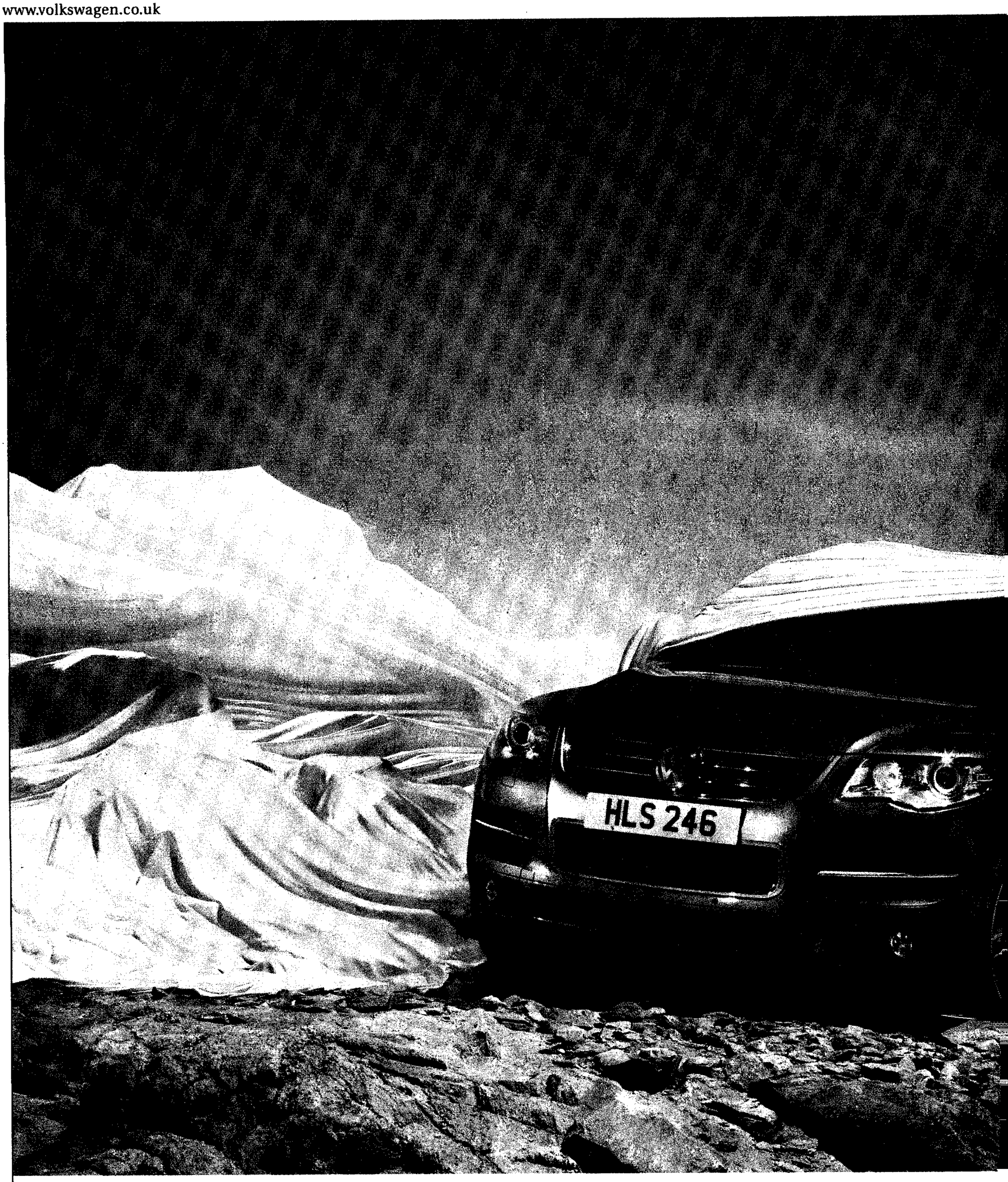

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But the real difference hides underneath. Like its predecessor, the new Touareg can climb slopes of 45°, tow 3.5 tonnes and ford depths of half a metre. Now, however, the new ABSplus system cuts braking distances on rough terrain by up to 20%. It's also equipped with the latest ESP with Active Rollover Protection for sharper cornering. So now it's as capable of turning corners as it is heads.
For a brochure, text 'Rocks' to 84880, or call 0800 037 7888 for more information.

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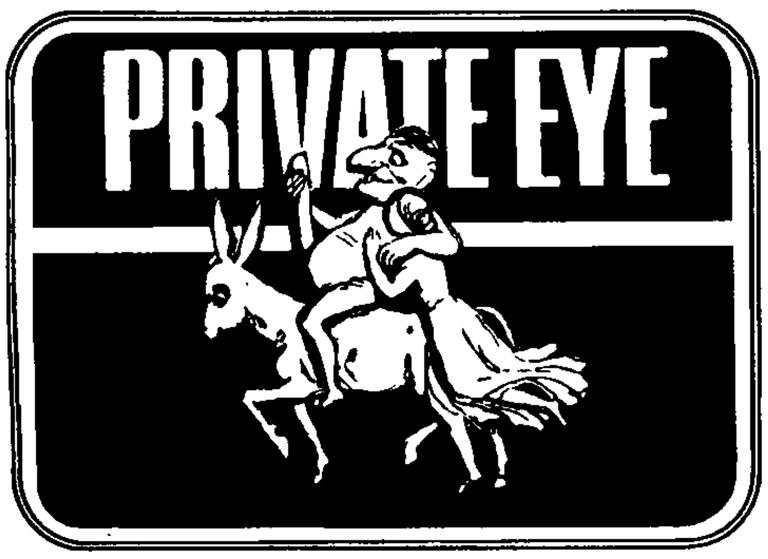
The new Touareg.

4); combined 28.0 (10.1) – 20.8 (13.6). CO_2 emissions 267 – 346g/km.



Easter funnies

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THE BBC heartily concurred with the government's view that the parading of the 15 navy hostages on Iranian television was unacceptable.

"The screening of the latest footage poisoned the climate", opined BBC diplomatic correspondent James Robbins in an article on the BBC News website on 2 April.

Less than an inch away was an enticing invitation: "WATCH the new footage".

● *More Media News p.11*

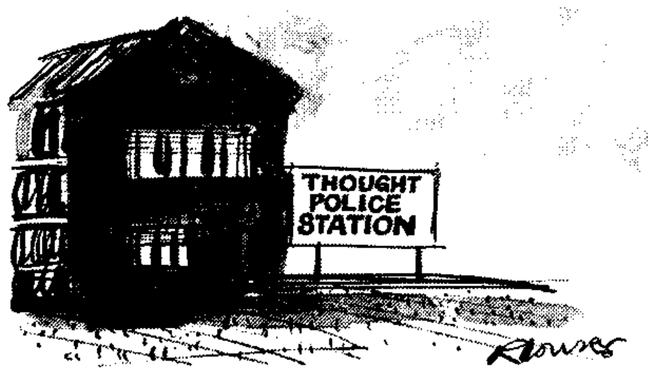
ASTONISHMENT and dismay on the Tory benches at David Cameron's most shameless display of opportunism so far.

When Manchester was chosen as the site for Britain's first super-casino, at the end of January, Dave was quick to applaud. "I think it was the right decision that it went to the north of England and actually it's going to have a regeneration impact," he said. "I've nothing against Greenwich at all, but, after all, London did get the Olympics and so I think that either Manchester or Blackpool probably made more sense."

On 21 March, just a week before Parliament voted on the casino site, Tory MPs were duly told there would be a one-line whip to approve Manchester. But then word reached Dave of a rebellion among Labour MPs. If the Tories also opposed Tessa Jowell, he realised, she might even lose. So, with a tyre-screeching U-turn, he imposed a three-line whip ordering all his MPs to vote *against* Manchester.

Shome inconsistency, surely? "We are being consistent," a party spokesman bleated, "with our priority of reducing the problem of harmful gambling." A likely story: without the profits from gambling, the Tories' bank balance wouldn't be half so healthy. Two of their biggest donors in the past few years, Stuart Wheeler and Michael Spencer (now also the party treasurer), are respectively the owners of IG Index and City Index – spread-betting firms, where the punter's losses can be limitless.

● *More HP Sauce p.8*



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ABC

FULL MARKS to the £1,500-a-day plus "turnaround team" shipped in to Broomfield, Chelmsford's large district general hospital, in order to make some 250 job cuts and £14m worth of savings.

By picking off relatively easy, non-unionised targets – the secretarial and support staff – they have managed to paralyse the hospital within a few short weeks.

Worse, the Mid-Essex Hospital Trust has been accused of putting patients at risk as records, notes and letters wait to be typed up and passed to GPs or patients. Those lucky enough to get appointments are arriving without clinical notes; test results are not being followed up swiftly enough; patients are even coming for surgery without the necessary operating instruments being there because that detail too is arranged by consultants' PAs; and post mortem findings are not being conveyed to bereaved families.

The aim of the turnaround team, led by finance chief Frank Banks, was to reduce the admin staff by half and pool the talents of those who were left. James Kellerman, a consultant neurosurgeon who specialises in spinal surgery, told the *Eye*: "We made it clear at the very beginning that secretaries hold the whole system together and the plans were counterproductive. Sadly we were quickly proven right. This penny-pinching is risk-taking with patients' lives."

That risk was acknowledged by the hospital when, amid mounting concern in the *Essex Chronicle*, the trust sent 1,400 tapes of consultants' letters and other material to an agency for typing. Hardly cheap – and certainly not without risk to patient confidentiality.

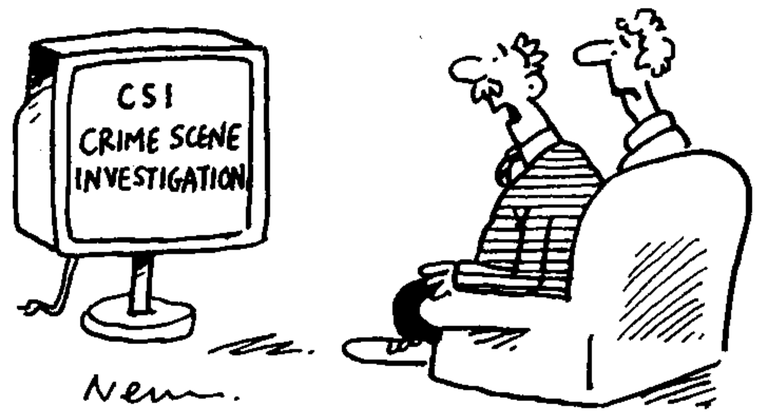
But at least the "turnaround team" can show they are reducing staff. Brilliant.

● *More NHS news: Health Check p.29*

DAYS after 15 of the crew of HMS *Cornwall* were taken prisoner at gunpoint by Iranian forces in the Gulf, the April edition of *Navy News*, the "official newspaper of the Royal Navy", was published.

Of the ongoing diplomatic crisis it carried no word. Instead, the front page story on one of the Navy's most impressive vessels opened, "HMS *Cornwall* patrols calm waters between the oil terminals of the Northern Arabian Gulf…"

"Have you come far?"



"It used to be the cricket highlights"

THE LAVENDER LIST

IN 1977, a year after Harold Wilson left Downing Street, his former press secretary Joe Haines disclosed that his notorious resignation honours list "was Lady Falkender's, written out in her own hand on the lavender-coloured notepaper she often used".

Haines's revelations about the influence of Wilson's political secretary Lady Falkender, aka Marcia Forkbender, appeared in his book *The Politics of Power*. She didn't sue. There were even more damaging details in his 2003 memoir *Glimmers of Twilight*. Again Marcia took no action. Haines's portrait of life at No 10 was confirmed by Wilson's former policy adviser Lord Donoughue, in *The Heat of the Kitchen* (2003) and *Downing Street Diary: With Harold Wilson in No 10* (2004). She never sued over those either, nor over countless other accounts of the Wilson years which cite the evidence of Haines, Donoughue and other witnesses.

Yet last week the BBC meekly handed Lady Falkender £75,000 and apologised for the "distress and embarrassment" caused by last year's television drama *The Lavender List*, written by *Eye* hack Francis Wheen – which alleged that, er, she might have had a hand in Wilson's resignation honours list. The BBC has promised never to show the film again.

The cravenness of this capitulation is quite extraordinary. Falkender hadn't even issued a writ – merely dispatched a letter of complaint via the inevitable Carter-Fuck and Partners. If she had gone on to pursue a libel action, Haines and Donoughue would have been able to give first-hand testimony about the hellish scenes they witnessed at No 10, which would have been far more damaging to her reputation than anything in the film. Yet the BBC surrendered without a shot being fired, and without bothering to consult or warn Wheen.

Reports of last week's settlement said the BBC had apologised to Falkender "for a drama that claimed she had an affair with [Wilson] and drew up the Labour prime minister's resignation honours list". Actually the film didn't directly claim they had an affair. It quoted what Wilson himself told Joe Haines: that during one of her regular temper tantrums Falkender had said to Mary Wilson, "I went to bed with your husband five times in 1956 and it wasn't satisfactory". But it also emphasised that Wilson denied any such affair.

This scene in the drama was identical to Haines's version in *Glimmers of Twilight* – still available in bookshops and through Amazon. "I don't withdraw any of the statements I have made in the past," he said last week. Falkender's alleged comment to Mary Wilson was repeated last Thursday in the *Daily Mail*, whose lawyers and editors are clearly made of sterner stuff than those at White City.

Why are BBC executives so unwilling to defend a programme which they originated, vetted and approved? The idea for *The Lavender List* – and its title – came from the BBC, not the author. After Wheen delivered his script the corporation's legal department spent months scrutinising every line until satisfied that it could be justified if Falkender took umbrage.

Now that she has taken umbrage, however, BBC chiefs and lawyers curl up like salted slugs – while milady Forkbender walks off with £75,000 of licence-payers' money.

JOINED-UP ENERGY POLICY

BRITISH ENERGY is trying to get new power stations built on its existing sites, even though these locations were rejected by the Committee for Radioactive Waste Management in 2001 because of rising sea levels.

In February, British Energy called for investment partners to help it build new power stations on the sites of its existing atomic plants. The current reactors will eventually need replacing, and on some sites they have already ceased generation. These sites are politically attractive: it will be easier to get planning permission without lengthy inquiries because they already have nuclear facilities.

However, all the plants were built by the sea for easy access to water for cooling systems in the days before anybody worried about global warming. The Flood Hazard Research Centre at Middlesex University underlined the risk posed by rising sea levels at the Bradwell, Hinkley Point and Sizewell sites in a report this month. Bradwell's vulnerability to flooding is also shown on the Environment Agency website, where an interactive map has water on three sides of the reactor with the sea lapping at the visitor centre.

Not hugely reassuring.

PUBS & PUBMEN

FORMER regulars at the Lewes Arms in Sussex aren't the only drinkers to be cursing giant brewer Greene King's contemptuous treatment of locals.

Last November, *Eye* 1171 reported how Suffolk-based GK intended to remove locally brewed Harveys beer from the 200-year-old Sussex pub and impose its own products, despite a 1,200-signature petition from locals, including MP Norman Baker. In December the Harveys was withdrawn. The locals have since conducted a boycott of the pub, now in its fourth month, which has seen its takings slump by around 90 percent.

At least the Lewes exiles live in hope of returning to their local one day. In Tottenham, north London, regulars at the Botany Bay, a Victorian pub in Philip Lane, have seen their local closed and gutted by workmen despite protests.

After Greene King closed the pub and put it up for sale, a local entrepreneur expressed interest in buying the premises and keeping it going. However, when he contacted Greene King they told him that they were not interested in selling it as a pub. Workmen are currently clearing the interior and it is believed the aim is to turn the old boozer into luxury flats. Curiously, there is no record of any planning application having been submitted for that address.

Haringey trades council has accused Greede King of "behaving like a vandal". Local TUC president Keith Flett said: "We are disgusted with Greene King. The Botany Bay had its issues as a pub but it was well frequented and had a much used meeting room upstairs. When there was someone willing to run it as a pub when Greene King weren't it is obscene that they won't sell it on."

'Barfly'

Street of Shame

THE *Sun* landed itself in hot water last August by publishing photos of "budding TV presenter" Natalie Pinkham being fondled by Prince Harry. It later emerged that the images were not recent, as the paper claimed, but three years old, and had allegedly been stolen from Pinkham's flat.

The photos had in fact come courtesy of Max Clifford to take the heat off one of his own clients, as the *Eye* soon revealed. As for Pinkham, her spokesperson complained that "the pictures are personal and were never intended for publication. Natalie is distressed and angry that somebody has either stolen or somehow managed to make copies of her private photographs."

Not so distressed, however, that she would shun the *Sun*. Last month Pinkham gave the paper an exclusive interview, discussing her friendship with the Prince after the pair had again been linked in a London nightclub. Why was she so ready to forgive and forget? The article included a small clue: "Natalie spoke just hours before flying to Monaco to cover the European Poker Tour for Eurosport and Challenge TV. Next month she takes up a series of daredevil challenges for Channel 4's *Adrenaline Rush*. She posed for a daring set of pictures to publicise the show."

That's right. Her flagging broadcasting career was in dire need of publicity, and this time there were no problems with the pictures – Pinkham in her underwear, naturally.

P.S. The Clifford client for whom the *Sun* so kindly pulled its unflattering story in August was England manager Steve McClaren – the same Steve McClaren whom it now derides as "McDonut" and "dead man walking"!

REBEKAH WADE's *Sun* excelled itself last month with a feature entitled "24 sickening hours in Perv Britain", offering readers a vital reminder that "paedophiles and child sex offenders are the scourge of modern life".

A few days later, TV editor Sara Nathan offered her readers a treat with a picture of actress Helen Flanagan, who has played Kevin and Sally Webster's daughter on *Coronation Street* since she was 10, wearing a low-cut top. "Corrie babe Helen Flanagan, 17, blossoms as she grows into her role as minx Rosie Webster," she observed.

IN A THOUGHTFUL piece on "Edifice Complex", Sir Simon Jenkins introduces *Guardian* readers to one of Parkinson's lesser known laws: "When an organisation commissions an architectural monstrosity for itself, it is almost certainly on its last legs."

Examples cited by Jenkins include the Home Office, which endured three years of internal chaos after moving to "sparkling new offices in Marsham St", and MI6, which "helped win the Cold War from a rat-infested block in Southwark and is helping lose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan from a gleaming palace in Vauxhall". The main reason for edifice complex, he thinks, is that "top people prefer lunching with architects and consultants to liaising with colleagues", while "resentful staff react with months of feuding over space".

Oddly enough, in 18 months the *Guardian* is due to move from rat-infested Farringdon Road to sparkling new offices near King's Cross. Huge amounts of management time have already been spent lunching with architects and consultants, while staff bicker over who will get a desk space, where that might be, and even over the size of the bike shed.

Somehow Alan Rusbridger and his executives failed to spot this implicit subtext, and Jenkins's piece was allowed to appear.

WHAT has happened to the *Mirror*'s doughty class-warriors Paul Routledge and Kevin Maguire?

Last December, Maguire could barely conceal his contempt for "City fat cats" whose bonuses alone "are expected to nudge £9 billion this year. Yep, that's right, billion, not million. The average salary among the ranks of the champagne-quaffing, red-braced brigade in the merchant banks and dealing rooms will top 100 grand. Nice work if you can get it."

Two months later, Routledge savaged "wanker banker" Vince Keegan, who had objected to Peter Hain's suggestion that a generous portion of city bonuses should be handed over to charity: "The 'casual wealth' handed out to these fat cats creates envy and antagonism that breeds socially undesirable behaviour," Routers railed.

And yet, when a high profile British chief executive was awarded a 50 percent pay rise last month, taking her annual income to £1.5m even though she has presided over a fall in sales and profits, and widespread job losses, neither raised a murmur of protest.

No doubt both will be sure to raise the matter with their boss Sly Bailey, the useless fat cat in question, the next time they make it into the *Mirror*'s offices.

WHO will be next to help BAE Systems, desperate to stop its name being synonymous with the Saudi bribery scandal, get some positive PR?

First the Smith Institute, Gordon's favourite think-tank, had a go with a book funded by BAE and featuring Ed Balls (*Eye* 1178). And now the Labour-supporting *New Statesman* – which conveniently shares office space with the Smith Institute – has stepped up to the mark with a 32-page supplement sponsored by BAE.

Amid pictures of BAE's futuristic warplanes, *NS* readers were treated to corporate promo speak from BAE boss Mike Turner, who assured them that his firm "holds huge sway" and that "when BAE Systems wins a major contract, the benefit is felt elsewhere".

Both statements are certainly true: BAE was able to "sway" the government into dropping the investigation into Saudi bribes, and it seems a great many middlemen politicians and princes may be benefiting from BAE's contracts!

But not everything went the arms firm's way in its paid-for supplement. *Independent* correspondent Marie Woolf opened her interview with Alistair Darling with a question about the quashing of the BAE bribery investigation, leading the minister to bluster, "I strongly believe that any wrongdoing or bribery or corruption needs to be condemned". But not, presumably, prosecuted.

Worse was the eyebrow-raising quote from Darling chosen to headline the interview – "We Don't Sell Ourselves Enough". Alas, when it comes to BAE, ministers sell themselves too often and too cheaply.

JUST FANCY THAT 1

"In business, politeness is bullshit. What you need is honesty – my honesty."

– Gordon Ramsay, July 2006.

"I nicked it [the reservations book]. I blamed Marco. Because I knew that would fuck him and that it would call off the dogs. I still have the book in a safe at home. It was my one stroke of genius, fucking somebody over without his knowing that I was the one who done it."

– Ramsay explains his honest approach to business, March 2007

BACK IN January, the Eye noted the sterling service the Daily Mail was offering to stalkers in providing them with full descriptions of royal girlfriend Kate Middleton's home, workplace, daily routine and car, a "blue VW Golf" which they helpfully photographed from two different angles to aid recognition.

Hold on to your cameraphones and sniper rifles, however: on 29 March the *Mail* had a hot update. "Cruising around town in her new silver Audi, Kate Middleton takes another step closer to becoming a Windsor," reported Royal correspondent Rebecca English. "Miss Middleton swapped her old VW Golf for the three-door hatchback only a couple of days ago – but immediately put it to the test in heavy London traffic. Looking stylish in skinny black jeans, knee-high boots and a grey belted top, she could be seen yesterday stopping off en route to her offices in Kew for a cup of coffee." For those unaware of what a woman in a car might look like, the paper helpfully provided a photograph of Ms Middleton at the wheel of the "1.9 litre turbo diesel A3".

Curiously, you will find no trace of the photograph in question in online newspaper archives, where it is replaced by a notice informing browsers that "this article has been removed by the publisher due to legal reasons", or on the paper's website, where the entire story has disappeared. Could this be in any way related to the fact that Kate Middleton complained that afternoon to the Press Complaints Commission about a shot in the morning's *Daily Mirror* taken during the very same trip, for which the paper has since issued a grovelling apology?

And could the decision of her lawyers, Harbottle and Lewis, to pick on the *Mirror*, which merely showed Ms Middleton walking down the street with her coffee, rather than the *Mail,* have anything to do with the fact that the latter paper noted she "managed to negotiate a cut-price deal on her A3 coupe thanks to her royal links… [and] the exposure the deal will afford the manufacturer"?

RICHARD DESMOND is happy to be judged by the company he keeps – at least when he's meeting the Queen at the opening of the Dirty Des Wing at Moorfields hospital (1179). But he is rather less keen to publicise some of his other associates, particularly those on his payroll.

There was his company secretary, James Brown, recruited by Desmond after serving a lengthy prison sentence for holding a loaded shotgun against a potential witness's head while shouting: "Are you going to give evidence against my friend you Irish bastard?" Then there's his director of advertising, Stan Myerson, who under a previous regime at the *Express* was sacked for stealing vast sums in fraudulent expenses and bonuses. Former *Express* managing director Andrew Cameron described Myerson as "the most distasteful and unpleasant man I met in all my newspaper years". Nor should we forget Rob Shepherd, the *Daily Express* football writer who in 2004 was sentenced to 14 months for attacking a man in a wine bar. And then of course there's Dirty Des's former business partner Ricky Martino, a US mobster currently serving 54 months in a Kansas jail.

Now, to top it all, one of Des's staff has been banged up for eight years for robbery with violence following the recent "Reservoir Dogs" trial at Kingston Crown Court. Vincent "Vin" Bellamy belonged to a gang of particularly vicious thugs who terrorised wealthy homeowners in Kent for seven months. In several of the robberies the victims were threatened with amputation of ears and fingers and then had millions of pounds of cash and valuables stolen.

Bellamy lived north of the river and was an Express Newspapers delivery driver to Kent. His alibi, when the police found a surgical glove he had been wearing at a victim's house, was that he wore them to stop his hands getting dirty from newsprint and one must have dropped off into a copy of the *Daily Express*. This copy was then delivered to the victim's home and fell out in a downstairs toilet while he was reading it – or so Bellamy claimed. The jury decided otherwise.

Poor old Dirty Des does seem to be drawn to these unsavoury characters. Perhaps he should have a word with his personnel department the next time the prisons are emptied to ensure that no more felons end up on the payroll.

CLUEDO: CRICKET WORLD CUP SPECIAL EDITION

Suspects

"Was cricket coach killed by a bookie?"
– Evening Standard, 21 March

"Did match fixers want him dead?"
– Daily Mail, 22 March

"'Mafia executed cricket chief Bob'"
– Mirror, 22 March

"Yardies fed Bob venom in his bath"
– Daily Star, 23 March

"Woolmer strangled by a hitman"
– Express, 23 March

"More than one killer was involved"
– Times, 23 March

"Did a cricketer kill Woolmer?"
– Sunday Express, 25 March

"Al-Qaeda link to Woolmer murder"
– Sun, 29 March

Weapons

"He had suffered a suspected heart attack. There are no suspicious circumstances surrounding his death."
– Daily Mail, 19 March

"Did drink and drugs OD kill coach?"
– Evening Standard, 19 March

"World Cup coach was strangled"
– Daily Mail, 22 March

"Test ace Bob murdered with snake venom."
– Daily Star, 23 March

"Poisoned dish sent to room"
– Sun, 23 March

"Was he REALLY strangled?"
– Daily Mail, 31 March

"Cricket legend was killed by drug from ancient plant – cops believe it was sprinkled on his sleeping pills."
– Sunday Mirror, 1 April

"The Pakistan coach slipped in the shower after downing a bottle of whisky"
– Express, 2 April

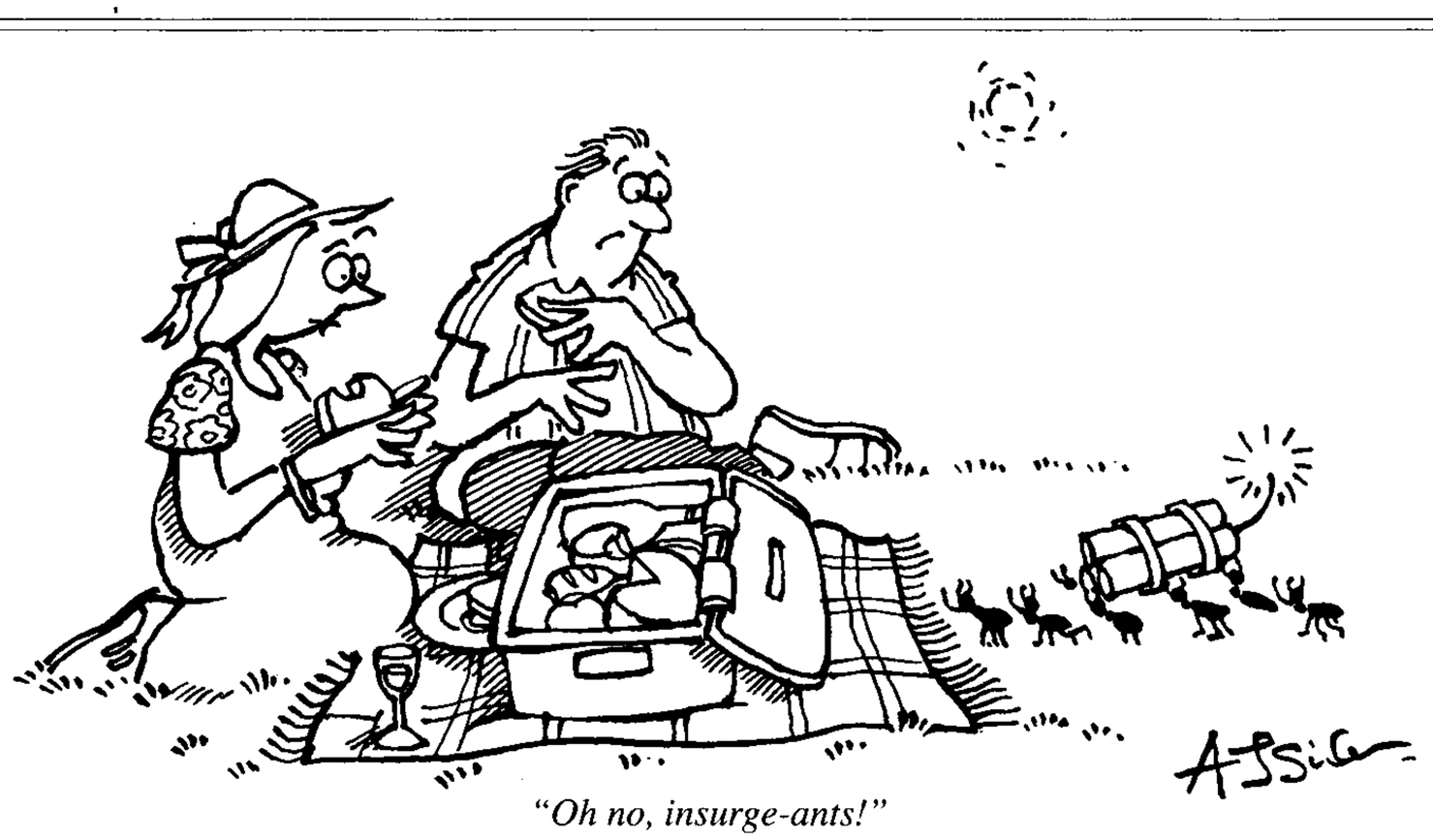
"Squashed carton of mango and carrot juice – did this contain poison?"
– Sun, 3 April

JUST FANCY THAT 2

Anne Snelgrove (South Swindon, Lab): Does my right hon. Friend think it time for a debate on how to increase the number of female MPs in this House, and does he share my disappointment at the fact that so far this year the Conservative party has selected 17 men and no women?

Mr Straw: A debate on this issue would be very important. I note that more people called "Mark" have been selected as Conservative candidates than have women.

– *Hansard*, 22 March.



"Oh no, insurge-ants!"

HACKWATCH : PIERS MORGAN

1. Shamed and Famed

ACCORDING to Piers "Morgan" Moron's new book, *Don't You Know Who I Am?*, Britain has become "a country that likes its celebrities to be real people, warts and all. They want honesty, soul-searching, confession and incident, and they're beginning to reject the cosseted, saccharine stars like Tom Cruise in favour of heroes who tell it like it is."

Does he have any particular hero in mind? The book offers a few clues...

5 August 2004. Moron declines an invitation to appear in *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!* "How could I even think about doing it without losing all semblance of whatever credibility I have left?" asks the man best known for dubious share deals and faked photos. He wishes to shun fame: "It's so inherently shallow."

18 October. Moron is asked to co-present *This Morning* for three days while Philip Schofield is away. He is "slightly concerned at the prospect of plunging myself into cheesy daytime telly", for fear it might harm his reputation as an *homme serieux*. Fortunately he now has "an altogether more serious TV platform", a political chat-show with Amanda Platell. "They're saying it could run for years."

27 October. On *This Morning*, Moron sings "Macarena" with Timmy Mallett, "the man who had memorably murdered it in the charts a few years earlier". (Not that memorably, perhaps: Macarena was recorded by Los Del Rio, whereas Timmy Mallett's hit was "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka dot Bikini".)

25 January 2005. Moron wonders if interrogating politicians on *Morgan and Platell* is beneath his dignity. "The viewer might be amused by the confrontation, but the voter is rarely given much of an insight into policy or idealogy [*sic*]." Luckily the BBC has a more intellectually rigorous proposal for him: presenting showbiz reports. "It sounds potentially brilliant."

12 March. He appears on *Test the Nation*, alongside famous weatherman John Kettley and BBC political hack John Pienaar. "It seems that no matter what I think about it, I am now officially a celebrity," he records. "There's very little, it seems, that I can do about it."

20 May. Moron is appalled by *Celebrity Love Island*. "Everyone thinks they can be a star now, just by prancing about on shows like this." He yearns for the days when telly featured "people with genuine talent".

27 September. Moron is invited on to *Celebrity Weakest Link*. "Am I not in danger of becoming the very thing I despise most: a talentless Z-list wannabe celebrity, whoring myself around the TV airwaves just for the sake of being famous?" It is, he admits, "both a concern and a dilemma".

18 October. After meeting Steve Coogan, Moron decides that "being a celebrity must be absolutely wonderful".

28 October. Moron's new career is taking off at last: he has been invited to host the Hair and Beauty Journalism awards next month.

8 November. Moron meets Ulrika Jonsson. "She's what I would call a professional celebrity, someone who is just famous for being famous," he observes pityingly. "It seems a soulless, slightly absurd existence."

24 November. "The pressure to perform is suddenly immense. I spent the whole morning honing my speech." Yes, it's the all-important Hair and Beauty Journalism Awards. And it's a triumph! "They said they'd like to invite me back next year," he discloses proudly.

12 April 2006. Moron records the *Davina* show with Jade Goody. "It's my job now," he explains. "If you're a celebrity, then this is the kind of thing you have to do to keep your name in the public eye."

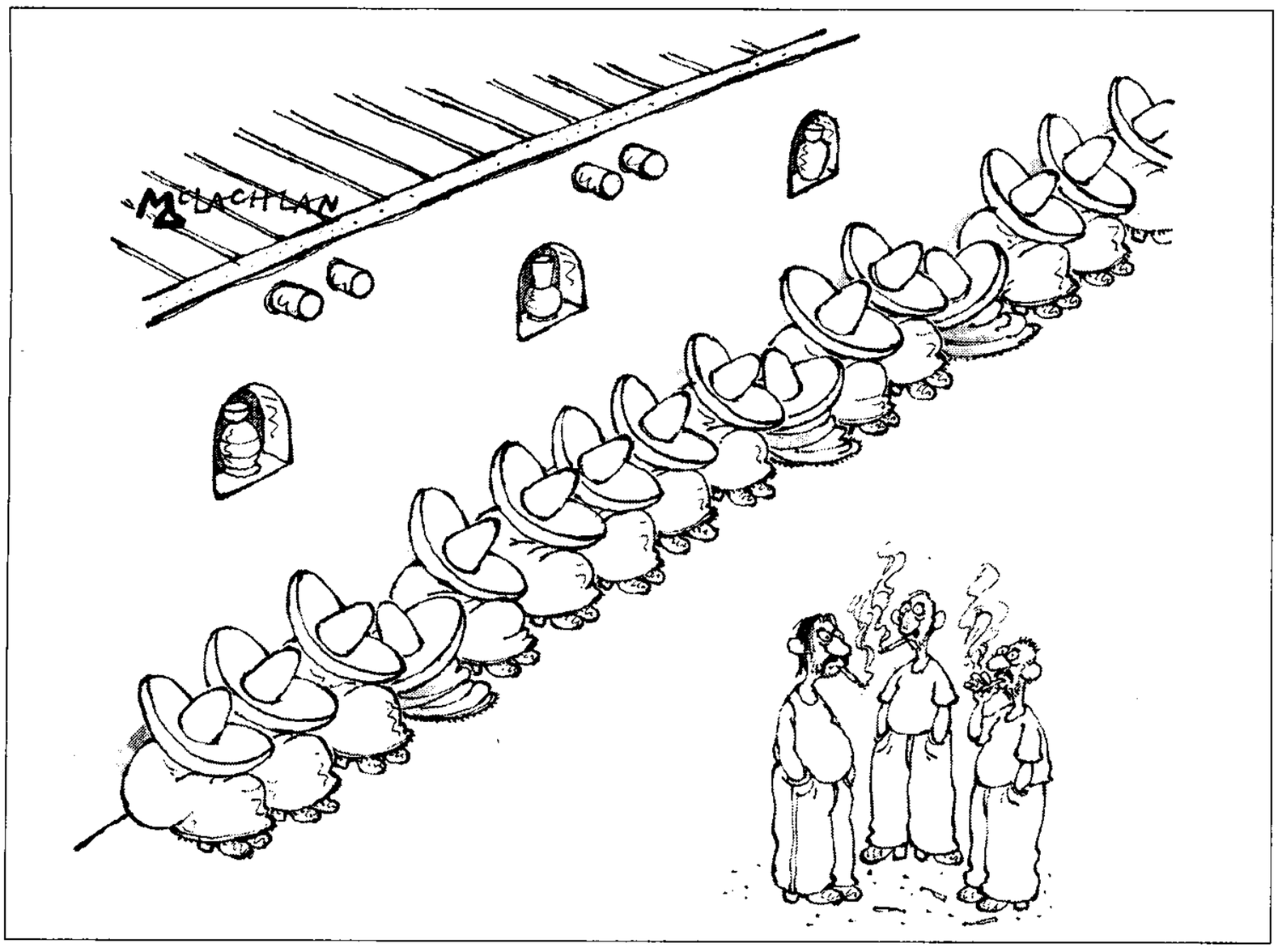
5 June. Simon Cowell has flown him to Hollywood to judge a TV talent contest. It seems a chance in a lifetime, but will he have to sacrifice himself "at the altar of Hollywood fame and grubby fortune? If that's what being a celebrity means, then I don't want it".

13 September. Back in London, still musing about fame. "The more well known I've become, the more sympathetic I am to the celebrity cause."

25 September. Moron discovers someone has written an entry for him on myspace. "The internet is a celebrity curse," he complains. There's "absolutely nothing to stop people pretending to be a celebrity. The implications of which are fairly serious."

24 October. "I have," Moron concludes, "grown to rather like being a celebrity." This from the man who in 2003 attacked "the media-fuelled vacuum of C-Grade celebrity nonsense" in his TV series *The Importance of Being Famous*. "We are getting so obsessed by these people laughably called stars that we are developing quite scary levels of celebrity psychosis," he said at the time. "What is wrong with us?"

What indeed?



2. Fill Your Books!

ALTHOUGH Piers Moron's new volume of diaries is mostly devoted to his quest for stardom, ghosts from his rackety past occasionally reappear – only to be banished at once.

In an entry for 17 October 2005, as the City Slickers' trial begins, he reassures readers that "I was personally cleared of any wrongdoing in the infamous share-tipping scandal in 2000, both by an internal Trinity Mirror investigation and the subsequent official DTI probe".

Actually, the DTI decided only that it didn't have enough evidence to prosecute him ("on the evidence currently available"), which is a somewhat different verdict. And although the Trinity Mirror investigation did exonerate Moron, the man who conducted that inquiry, Graham Livingston of Lovells, has since revealed that he wouldn't have cleared him had he known about a conversation between Moron and Nick Hewer, the Viglen PR man. It concerned a critical phone call on the day when the Slickers wrote their story tipping Viglen and Moron bought his shares in the company. Hewer testified at the trial that Moron asked him to lie about the time of the call to make it look less incriminating: it would be "helpful if the time could be pushed back from the time it was actually made".

In another diary entry, on 2 November 2005, news breaks in the City Slickers trial that Moron didn't buy £20,000 worth of Viglen shares, as everyone thought, but £67,000. "I'd admitted all this to Trinity Mirror on the morning the story first came out," he writes with a weary sigh, "and they had in turn informed all the investigating authorities, so it had never been a secret to anyone who needed to know.... Nobody wants to believe all this, though."

Possibly because it's untrue. "All the investigating authorities" would include the Press Complaints Commission, whose report on the affair thanked Trinity Mirror for its cooperation. Yet the PCC ruling – which was published in full by the *Mirror* under Moron's editorship – stated that he had bought only £20,000 of Viglen shares. Why was the PCC mislead about this central fact? And why didn't Moron correct the figure when he read the PCC ruling, instead of keeping the truth from both the investigating authorities and his readers?

3. The Editor's Editor

"IF YOU were offered photos of Paul Dacre snorting coke with hookers, would you publish the story?" Piers Moron asks *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger in a *GQ* interview, mischievously reprinted in the *Indie* last week. He returns to the subject at the end of the interview: "One final thought. If Paul Dacre was to publish a picture of you, in the *Daily Mail*, snorting coke with hookers, then would you get sacked?"

Why this curious obsession? In June 2004, soon after his departure from the *Mirror*, Moron organised a stag-party in Madrid for his mate Ellis Watson, Trinity Mirror managing director. One of the staging posts on this epic drunken jaunt was a club called Hot, near the Wax Museum in Madrid's central Plaza Colón – at which both cocaine and hookers were much in evidence. Presumably Piers resisted the temptation. But if he had succumbed it could hardly have been a sackable offence: he had already been fired in disgrace for a rather more serious misdemeanour.

The recurring theme of the interview is the sexual morality of editors. "Do you think that your own life would stand up to much ethical scrutiny?" Moron asks Rusbridger. "Do you consider that infidelity is always a private matter for public figures, for instance?"

Moron knows a thing or two about infidelity, of course: while still married to his wife, Marion, he had a long affair with young hackette Marina Hyde. By a curious twist of fate, Hyde is now a star columnist on the *Grauniad* and a favourite *protégée* of Alan Rusbridger.

IT WAS just what Brown's enemies wanted – internal government documents warning that pensions would be hit by his tax changes. And the brute ignored them.

Interestingly, a fuller reading of the papers shows that Gordon's 1997 pension tax credit changes could have been affordable for pension funds. The companies behind the funds, however, preferred not to make the minimal necessary contributions over the following years. Instead, they believed their own hype about a booming stock market – on the back of which they took extended pensions contributions holidays and used the cash for their own extravagant bonuses and share options. Now that greed has shafted their employees' pension funds, along comes a handy scapegoat in the form of internal documents – which actually don't say much that wasn't known at the time anyway.

Spare little sympathy for Gordon, though. Even on this relatively honest decision, he's turned shifty, releasing the information 24 hours after appearing before the Treasury select committee – probably the last chance MPs had to question him in any depth before he takes the top job.

Number Crunchings

£15bn ■ Cost to pension funds of Gordon Brown's 1997 "raid" up to 2001

£20bn ■ Cost to pension funds of companies' contributions holidays up to 2001

THE most dubious claim in the furore over the Chancellor's 1997 pension tax credit changes came from the man who hopes to move to No.11 himself soon, economic secretary Ed Balls.

"We decided on the basis of civil service advice to go ahead…" Balls told Radio 4's *Today* programme. In fact the documents released show that the civil servants' advice was at best equivocal, while anybody around the Treasury in 1997 knew that on anything big, officials' opinions counted for nothing. (Strangely, Brown's other major early move, the universally applauded decision to hand interest rate control to the Bank of England, has never been credited to the civil service.)

What mattered was what Brown and his special advisers, foremost among them his chief economic adviser Ed Balls, wanted. And they wanted an extra £4bn or so a year, partly to pay for a corporation tax cut. They also believed the change would benefit industry by removing the tax advantage for companies paying out profits rather than reinvesting them – reasoning that was influenced by Harvard-educated Balls's US economic connections.

Now Brown's protégé mysteriously wants to distance himself from the big decision, even falsely claiming that the CBI was up for it. Sidling away when the shit hits the fan? Now who could he have learnt that from?

CALLED TO ORDURE

HOME Office minister Joan Ryan was not much rated before she gave evidence to the Commons European scrutiny committee. By the time the committee's (mainly Labour) MPs had finished with her, there was nothing left of her slender reputation. She was flattened.

A dopey sort with a droning voice, Ryan was summoned to explain why the government had bypassed Parliament over prisoner transfers in Europe. This means British subjects could be convicted abroad, transferred back to the UK against their will, and imprisoned here for conduct which is not criminal in Britain.

MPs were furious. Despite repeated warnings ministers had gone ahead and agreed a deal with European counterparts. The Commons had been denied its proper say.

Committee chairman Michael Connarty began with a rabbit punch. He sharply told Ryan she could not make the usual opening statement. The committee wanted answers, pronto. Why had Ryan and her boss John Reid broken the "spirit" of Parliament's scrutiny reserve? Connarty stared hard at Ryan. If he'd been a cop he could have been done for undue menacing of a suspect.

Ryan, already blotchy with stress, started to respond in a slow, drippy monotone which visibly irritated some of the MPs. "I do realise," she said like some half-tranquilised Thora Hird, "that there was possibly room for improvement in the handling and timing of scrutiny in this case."

She added: "I would always prefer to be in the position where the scrutiny reserve is satisfied." That's big of you, lady!

Veteran Labour backbencher Jim Dobbin (Heywood) told Ryan: "You were warned, not once but three times, that the government would regard what you did as a breach of the resolution. Did you ignore those warnings?"

Ryan said "no" but it was plain from her tangled answer that she meant "yes". She claimed the government had merely taken a "general approach". This was different to a "political agreement". And a "political agreement" was not the same as an "agreement". Eh? Even the three civil servants sitting at the table alongside Ryan started to look a little queasy. Connarty barked: "In the length of the answers we are losing some of the points." In other words: "Shut UP, woman."

James Clappison (Con, Hertsmere) immediately demolished Ryan's line about her "general approach". He pointed out that one of the warning letters she received had explicitly forbidden any such "general approach". Whoops. Ryan's hands were by now shaking. She was crossing her arms.

In her long answers she was repeating herself, even in the same paragraph. "I have the greatest of respect for the committee and for the support, help and advice that it affords us in our policy-making," she said. Some onlookers laughed.

Ryan's officials were now shifting from buttock to buttock. Peter Storr, Home Office international director, muttered something under his breath. It was not, from the sound of it, particularly flattering about the MPs. Connarty bridled. "Mr Storr, do you have a comment to make?" Storr, horrified to find himself the centre of attention, gulped. "No," he bluffed, "I was whispering to my minister." Connarty angrily told Storr: "Perhaps you could try and make your whispers to us."

All this passed the gormless Ryan by. "Pardon?" she said. Connarty: "I anticipated Mr Storr had started to speak." Storr was by now feverish with contrition.

Bill Cash (Con, Stone) wondered why Reid had not come along to the committee. Ryan: "The home secretary also has the greatest respect for this committee." Satirical mirth. Cash: "It does not look like it." Ryan: "He had overriding prior commitments." Cash: "Like what?" Ryan: "I can answer no further."

Connarty quoted information from the Labour chief whip that the Home Office had turned down a chance to face MPs before the Council of Ministers. When even the chief whip turns against the home secretary things are really bad.

Ryan was out of her depth, taking back answers almost the moment they had been uttered. Labour stalwart Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) said: "Why don't you own up, do the decent thing and then we can all go away?"

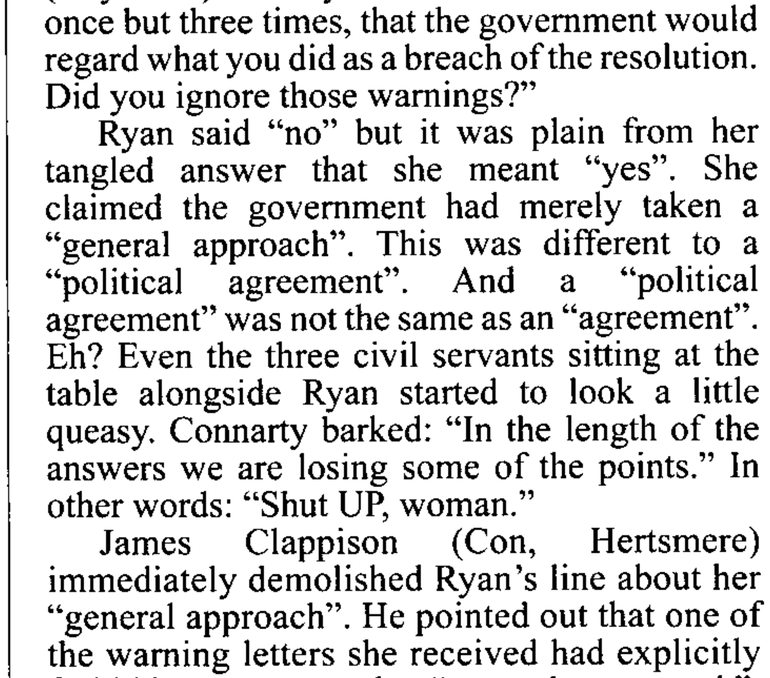
Ryan: "I cannot say we have made a mistake if I do not think that the case." Hoyle: "You've admitted on three occasions that you have." Ryan: "There are lessons to be learned." Hoyle: "If there are no mistakes, what lessons can you learn? You cannot have it both ways. This is ridiculous. You have total disregard for this committee." Ryan, almost in tears: "I do not think so."

Her last throw of the dice was to claim that the Cabinet Office had cleared Reid and Co of any naughtiness. Connarty exploded. "That is the problem!" he cried. "You want the Executive to judge on an Executive decision. We represent Parliament. We believe Parliament should have the say about Executive decisions. Who has primacy here, Parliament or another part of the Executive?"

Ryan: "I think the role of Parliament is extremely important." Important? Or easily ignored?

'Gavel Basher'

EYE COMPETITION
Spot The Balls



REFRESHING candour from senior Treasury official Mark Neale when the select committee questioned Gordon's mandarins on his budget.

Neale admitted that economists had been in the "right ball park" when they said 5.3 million people would lose out from scrapping the 10 percent income tax rate. The following day he was due at the Chancellor's side before the same committee, but was mysteriously absent. Perhaps, quipped Tory Michael Fallon, he had been "purged". A stony-faced Brown replied that he was very busy back at the Treasury.

Fallon could tell he was on to a winner and asked why, in a healthy economy, so many poor people should be made poorer – pointing out that Neale had also helpfully confirmed that the Treasury was assuming 75 percent of people would not claim the working tax credits necessary to stop them losing out. Brown's answer to this would have made Sir Humphrey blush: "He didn't say 75 percent wouldn't take it up; he said it was a forecast for public expenditure purposes." The 5.3 million will be pleased to hear it.

Number crunchings

+25% ■ Increase in public investment in science announced by Gordon Brown in the budget

−35% ■ Cuts to science funding announced by the DTI in February

JUST as Gordon Brown's biggest con trick, the private finance initiative, was about to be exposed by a group of awkward accountants, some expert goalpost-shifting from the Chancellor will once again enable him to keep a clean sheet.

Little-noticed in the mountain of budget papers was news that government accounting will move to international rules from 2008/09. The change comes as the Treasury's Financial Reporting Advisory Board (FRAB) was about to insist that the accountancy fiddle that kept PFI deals "off balance sheet" be reversed. That would have meant restating earlier years' figures and very probably showing Brown had already broken his "sustainable investment" rule – that public debt must not exceed 40 percent of gross domestic product.

By agreeing to change rules, however, this humiliation will be averted. Old figures don't have to be put on the new footing if doing so is "impractical" – and it won't be hard to claim that with over 700 PFI schemes across the public sector.

Though FRAB has been placated, there's still the problem of what to do when the change comes through in a couple of years and, on Gordon's latest projections, the 40 percent limit is broken. By a remarkable coincidence, when questioned on the rule by the Treasury select committee of MPs two weeks ago, the Chancellor announced that it was "under review". So just as the 40 percent rule is about to be broken, it could be conveniently scrapped!

COULD Gordon's embarrassment over the pensions documents be just what opponents of Freedom of Information wanted?

The Treasury handed over the papers days after the government had been forced to backtrack on a planned clampdown against media and campaigners using FoI laws (*Eyes passim*). More than 200 responses had been received over changes that would have imposed strict limits on information requests. Although the Department of Constitutional Affairs claimed there had been "a wide range of comments", the plans were almost universally condemned.

Now the government has agreed to re-open its consultation as to whether the Act should be altered at all. And along comes a perfect demonstration of the "dangers" of too much openness. The *Financial Times* helpfully reported former chancellor Ken Clarke and unnamed ex-mandarins opining that such disclosures would prejudice frank advice to ministers. In fact there are already exemptions from disclosure on these grounds. But on the back of this experience, many more current and former officials and MPs can be expected to urge a clampdown.

As there might be one or two more skeletons in the Brown cupboard, that could be very useful for the next PM over the coming years.

AT A RECENT parliamentary hearing on the government's use of consultants, the head of the Treasury's Office of Government Commerce, John Oughton, boasted that he had managed to get the average cost of using consultants down to £930 a day.

That's more than the Prime Minister earns and several times the going rate for a middle-ranking civil servant. It will usually pay for a twenty-something with a nice line in management speak.

Yet because the going rate used to be around £1,200, every pound spent at the new rates contributes to the OGC's targets for more efficient government procurement. And the OGC pockets a 0.7 percent commission on every procurement contract, giving the arm of the Treasury responsible for efficiency in Whitehall an incentive to encourage the rest of government to hire as many consultants as possible – which it does very effectively. Brilliant!

Number crunchings

Government waste – the race is on!

£2.3bn

■ Initial quote for the NHS IT programme, now estimated at £12.4bn

■ Initial quote for the Olympics, now estimated at £9.3bn

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

ASK your greengrocer how much he spent on potatoes last month, and he will probably be able to look it up on his PC. If he can't, his bookkeeper certainly will.

Go to Brussels and ask the Commission what it spends on subsidising the media, however, and you get a blank wall.

This is what happened to three MEPs who have been trying to get answers since mid-January. Swedish MEP Christofer Fjellner asked how much the Commission, including representative offices, paid to "newspapers and magazines, radio, TV and other media such as databases, news bulletins, web pages or to production companies", excluding payments for commercial services such as job ads. Similar questions have been asked by MEPs Thomas Wise and Jens-Peter Bonde.

Some weeks later, the Commission replied that it was "conducting a thorough examination of the relevant files and will provide the information… as soon as possible". And after that? Silence.

Back in early 2004, mandarins were said to have put aside £11m of citizens' hard-earned cash in a then devilish new tactic to get across positive messages about the EU in the press. At that time Commission spokesman Reijo Kemppinen said applicants for the bounty did not have to admit they were being paid by the EC. But since the time of the Ark, the convention in the media trade is that the status of editorial, advertisement and "advertorial" is clearly indicated to readers.

So why the dilly-dallying over answers to the MEPs' questions? Perhaps EU grandees have only just realised that press bribery is not on.

JUDGMENT is expected any day "soon" from the European Court of Justice as to whether Marta Andreasen, the European Commission's whistle-blowing accounting officer, was wrongfully dismissed.

In 2002, Marta, then Ms CFO Europe, spoke out over inadequate accounting systems for the EU's £60bn budget. Later she got the boot, partly, at least, because speaking out is against staff regulations. The case was transferred to the Civil Service Tribunal, a division in the EU court system, and heard last November. So how likely are justice and fair play to triumph in the EU's judicial arm – an integral part of Europe's huge bureaucracy and employment club?

Among the precedents is the case of Edith Cresson. Yes, the court did find the French former prime minister in breach of her obligations as a commissioner. But, said the judges, the finding of "breach" in itself constituted an appropriate penalty, so this particular mandarin got off with nothing much worse than a ticking off.

Outsiders have fared less well. Hans-Martin Tillack, a German journalist disliked in Brussels for writing about scandals in Eurostat, claimed damages from the Commission for wrongful arrest after Olaf, its anti-fraud office, passed files to the Belgian police. But this was insufficient connection to the Commission for his claim to succeed, said the judges.

Andreasen will no doubt be hoping she does not get similar treatment to Tillack – nor fall foul of delaying tactics: nearly 40 cases against the Commission from 2000-1 are still pending at the Court of First Instance. And the judiciary's reputation for independence can't have been helped by the appointment there of Enzo Moavero Milanesi in May last year. From 2002 to 2005, Signor Milanesi was, er, deputy secretary-general of the European Commission.

EU-phemisms

They took our money and told us to get stuffed

"I AM WRITING to ask if you would be willing to support a campaign that my colleagues and I in the Conservative Party are launching," wrote shadow transport secretary Chris Grayling to the bosses of haulage companies recently, requesting that they display large posters on the back of all their lorries "to highlight the transport issues we face".

"We have deliberately designed the campaign so that it is not an overtly party political one," Grayling assured recipients – and indeed, anyone following one of the full-colour 60cm by 80cm posters up the motorway would be hard pressed to spot the word "Conservatives" anywhere on it.

Instead, they will be greeted by the entirely non-partisan message: "Britain's in a jam – I blame the Government."

'Backbiter'

Freight train blaze

A pod of killer whales has been seen feeding in the Firth of Forth, close to Edinburgh.

Daily Telegraph

TV

The Mark of Cain (Channel 4 – possibly)

OVER the past fifty years most newspapers – even the *Mail* and the *Telegraph*, though not quite the *Express* – have changed their attitudes to many things: politicians, unseasonal spells of hot weather, Royalty, semi-clad women. One subject, though, is treated now almost exactly as it would have been in 1957: television.

The papers still hate the young interloper with moving pictures, stealer of audiences and adverts, and consistently depict it as the source of all unpleasantness in the world. "CALLS TO BAN TV SHOCKER" is one of the few headlines which could have been used unchanged from the day of hot-metal to those of instant news alert message-texting.

The latest editorial candidate for censorship in the national interest is *The Mark of Cain*, a two-hour drama written by Tony Marchant which follows a group of British squaddies in Basra. The central characters are deranged racist piss-heads who do some of the stuff – provocation, taunting, torturing and mock trials of Iraqi insurgents – which has been the subject of courts martial and internal army inquiries.

But Marchant, whose previous credits include such peaks of TV drama as *Holding On* and *The Kid in the Corner*, is a dramatist rather than, say, a politician, army press officer or newspaper editorial writer and so this savagery is placed in the context of bullying commanding officers, peer pressure and, above all, terrible fear: there's a key scene in which a coke can lying in the street is believed to be a bomb, another in which the young recruits shake violently with terror when cornered by insurgents, yet another in which they are told that the flag-draped coffins of dead colleagues are empty, an attack having eviscerated them.

It's true that, during the scenes of illegal violence, he doesn't include the once statutory "good German" character to stand up and say: "Hey chaps, this kind of thing is against the traditions and regulations of the British Army and I won't have it. I am turning you all in to the General." But, in documented cases, actions of the kind portrayed were not prevented by such intervention and, anyway, drama does not always require such simplistic balance.

Unless, of course, you are a newspaper trying to cause more trouble for TV. Like the Falklands play *Tumbledown* in 1987, and *The Monocled Mutineer* at around the same time, *The Mark of Cain* has been editorially court-martialled for being rude about our serving men.

The difficulty for journalists, though, is now to make this charge stick. In the past, it has been enough simply to depict TV as a pack of long-haired hippies who have no respect for military values or the concept of national security. But the Iraq war, unlike the Falklands, has almost no public support and many readers of the more conservative press might tend to endorse Marchant's depiction of young working class men as vulgar, drunken thugs, although the traditional remedy – bring back national service – would be hard to apply in this case.

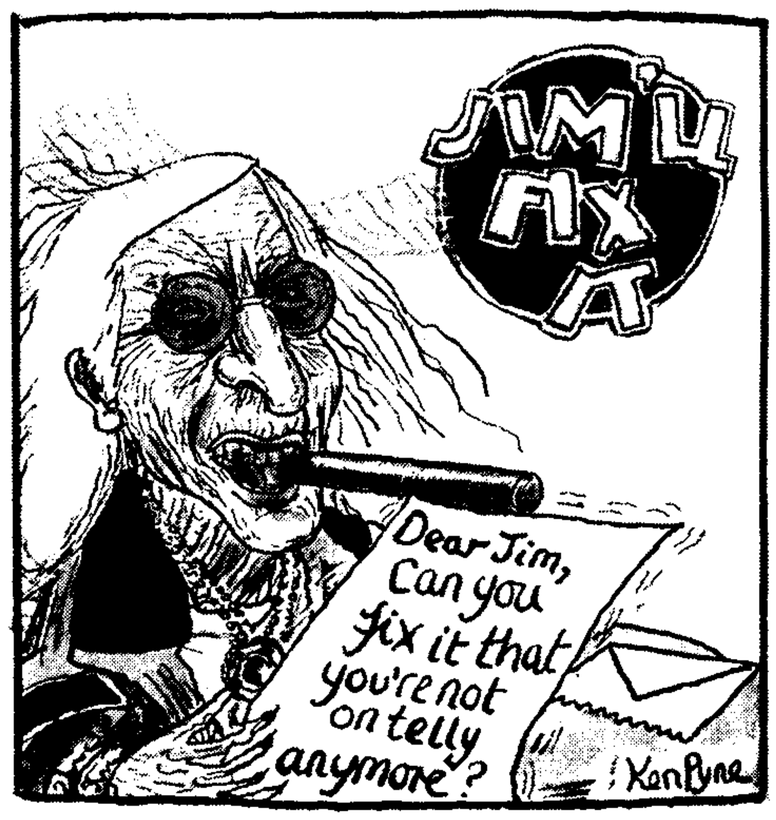
So a new tack is needed and it comes in the shape of "blood on their hands". We're told that, because of the internet, *The Mark of Cain* will be viewed in the Middle East and extracts could even be posted online as if they are actual army brutalities. This might expose British troops to reprisals. The naval hostages in Iran were also widely invoked - until, regrettably for these purposes, freed - and it was pointed out that "violent scenes" occurred in India following the racist bullying of Shilpa Shetty in *Celebrity Big Brother* which was also, note, produced by Channel 4.

The problem with these arguments is that the reality of the "protests" in India is questionable and, even if they occurred, there would be a question of justification. A tacky humiliation game-show isn't worth the risk of a single potential death. But the largely theoretical risk of British squaddies in Basra being hated more than they are hated already can surely be justified by the right, in a democracy, to screen TV programmes questioning the conduct of a notoriously unpopular war.

It's a measure of how much the papers hate TV that they were prepared to ignore the fact that the campaign against the play was largely engineered by the Ministry of Defence which, after being shown a DVD for comment, copied it and despatched it to pro-army commentators and ex-soldiers. So desperate were they to attack and censor television that journalists who abhor the war in Iraq were prepared to do the dirty work of the department running it.

'Remote Controller'

"Your specialist subject: Dr Who 1963-2007"



MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

IF A WEEK is a long time in politics, it isn't in music. The concert you went to yesterday was probably devised, planned and booked more than a year ago. The opera you attend tonight will have been fixed in the schedules something like three years ago.

It's how things are in the international talent market. And it's time politicians woke up to the fact that if Britain is to have a serious musical life, managers need some forewarning of how much they will have in their budgets – instead of the chaotic state of unknowing that prevails today.

The Chancellor's budget speech, alas, maintained a discreet silence on the subject of arts funding. All we were told is that the across-the-board government spending review that was meant to have happened last year and was then postponed until this spring, has now been put back yet again until the summer. Which means that no one in the publicly funded arts knows what their operating budgets will be as from 2008. The nearest thing they have to information is a mire of nudges, winks and rumour – and a crazily surreal set of conflicting signals from the government.

Last month, the Prime Minister made a rousing speech in praise of the British music industry (feeding £6bn a year into the economy, employing 130,000 people, "fundamental to the future of our country" etc etc) and promised that its future was secure under Labour. A week later, his culture secretary warned that the arts stand to lose more than £200m in lottery funding that will instead be diverted to the Olympics – a blow that will bring many music organisations to their knees.

And if that wasn't enough, a well-supported rumour is circulating in Whitehall that an early victim of Olympic overspend may just be ENO – which is yet again in crisis, issuing redundancy notices in all directions and faced with an immediate overall 10 percent staff cut.

According to leaked memoranda, Tessa Jowell is under pressure to relieve the Culture Department of the financial burden of ENO… by simply killing it off. The saving in subsidy would mean £20m a year to pour into the bottomless pit of the Olympics, together with whatever could be made on the sale of the building, maybe another £50m.

So much for the cultural priorities of Labour. So much for Tony Blair's promises. And small wonder the looks of dismay, despair and confusion on the faces of ENO staff when their new Easter production of Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* opened on Thursday. They don't know where they stand, who to believe, or what to do. Thanks, Tony, for your meaningful support.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

DUMB BRITAIN

BBC Radio Devon

Judi Spiers: If a person came from Ambridge, what would be the name of the radio soap?

Contestant: Er, I can't think.

Spiers: A clue. What would you be if you used a bow and arrow?

Contestant: Robin Hood.

Weakest Link: Goodies & Baddies, BBC1

Anne Robinson: In the 2006 TV drama series *Robin Hood*, Keith Allen played the villain, the Sheriff of… where?

Winner of Ladette to Lady: Pass.

Robinson: In human development, what 'b' is the usual four-letter word for a newborn infant?

Liz Brewer: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

Robinson: In human development, what 'b' is the usual four-letter word for a newborn infant?

Brewer: Wasp.

MEDIA NEWS

"TWENTY-FIVE years on, and the BBC still won't celebrate Mrs Thatcher's role in the Falklands War," screeched Geoffrey Wansell in the *Daily Mail*, over the news that the BBC was refusing to repeat Ian Curteis's 1981 drama *The Falklands Play* as part of this year's commemorations.

"The acclaimed 'factual drama'… has been hotly debated over the past two decades – not least by the BBC, which dismissed it at the time as 'jingoistic rubbish' – but never screened on a major television channel."

It was not until paragraph 35 of Wansell's 1,500-word epic that he got round to mentioning the fact that *The Falklands Play* was actually broadcast on BBC2 in 2002.

WHY, ITV boss Michael Grade was asked as he announced his channel's £275m deal to show FA cup and England games, should we believe that ITV will do a better job than it did with *The Premiership* – its last big rights-grab which destroyed the channel's Saturday night audiences and put paid to the career of Des Lynam?

That, a dismissive Mr Grade told the assembled hacks, was handled by "people who weren't sports fans".

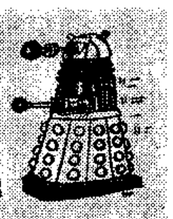
And who was the controller of ITV Sport at the time? One Brian Barwick, now chief executive of the FA, in which capacity he has just signed a spectacular rights deal with… ITV.

"THE problem is too much choice," *Daily Express* hack Simon Edge argued two weeks ago, in a leader-page lament about the pisspoor quality of British television.

"Decent telly does not have to be a thing of the past but, in the current climate, talented programme-makers are forced to fight their own bosses in order to make it. No wonder people yearn for days gone by."

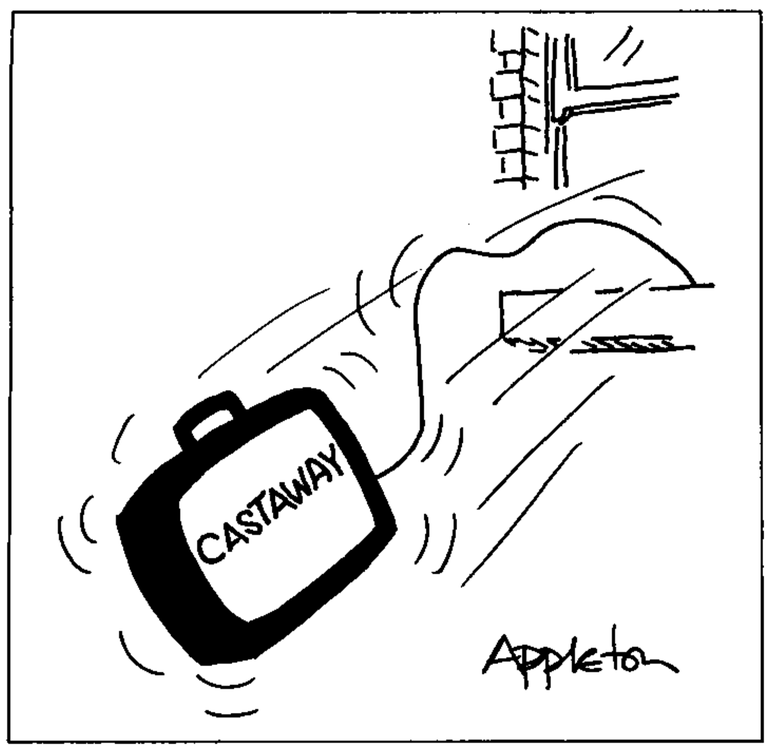
Readers consulting that day's schedules would see what he meant about being spoilt for choice. Richard Desmond's TelevisionX was offering *Anal Teens*, *Layla Jade Spunk-Loving Slut*, *Cum on my Great Big Tits* and *Filipino Sucky Fucky* – ample, proof, surely, of Edge's point that "quality TV does not have to be a distant memory".

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"Meg Pickard has been appointed as the *Guardian* website's head of communities and user experience. Ms Pickard was formerly the consumer experience lead for social media at AOL Europe. She will now head community management and engagement strategy for Guardian Unlimited and will take up the newly created post at the end of April 2007… Emily Bell, the director of digital content at Guardian News & Media, said "Her appointment confirms that user experience will be a top priority for Guardian Unlimited this year."

– News story, guardian.co.uk



***GUARDIAN* radio critic Elisabeth Mahoney gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up to the launch of Smooth Radio, created out of the ashes of Saga, at the end of March.**

"A younger, fresher line-up and music policy… Smooth Radio is a smart move, appealing to fiftysomethings who feel fortysomething… This is calm, unhurried and unruffled radio, and really rather likeable," she opined.

Nowhere in her piece did Mahoney find space to note that the station's "new owners GMG" also happen to be the owners of … the *Guardian.*

"Popular entertainment is so gay these days"

THE *Sun* performed a perfect heel turn in its coverage of Heather Mills' participation in American TV series *Dancing With the Stars.*

"Heather Mills wowed judges," the paper enthused on 28 March. "She strutted round the dance floor at ABC studios in Los Angles to huge applause. Her debut attracted the show's highest ever ratings and a flood of comments in online chat rooms. Some had predicted a 'quick departure' from the show. But it seems the US tide could be turning for Heather."

Some? Would that include the paper that just five days previously reported that "American viewers have told Heather Mills to Foxtrot Oscar after her first appearance on a celebrity ballroom TV show… A bid to win over the US public after becoming one of Britain's most hated women has backfired already. While viewers of the US version of *Strictly Come Dancing* have not yet had the chance to kick her off the show – the first elimination is next week – they have been letting rip with a barrage of scathing comments." Its name? The *Sun.*

CRITICS IN CON-TEXT

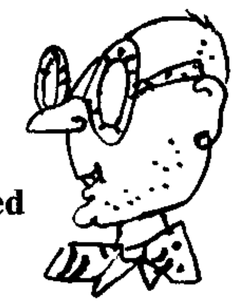
BRITISH film *I Want Candy* is, in the opinion of the *Observer*, "a crude, leering, poorly timed farce".

"A feebly written, flaccidly directed, pitifully acted attempt at a British sex comedy," reckoned the *Daily Mail*, while the *Guardian* said "it makes *Sex Lives of the Potato Men* look like *Citizen Kane*".

One newspaper, however, has never been less than enthusiastic about what it called a "surefire smash". Since January, when showbiz editor Victoria Newton started dropping hints about what "fellas" could look forward to in the film in which "ex-Baywatch pin-up Carmen Electra plays a porn legend", the paper has managed to drop the name *I Want Candy* into no fewer than ten news stories – most recently devoting half of the front page to the vital news that "*I Want Candy* star Carmen Electra" had performed "a dirty dance show for LESBIANS".

Could any of this be related to the fact that *I Want Candy* is partly produced by Sky Movies, owned by *Sun* proprietor Rupert Murdoch?

AD NAUSEUM



AFTER A 10-year hiatus, a new brand campaign for the *Guardian* is adorning our buses and billboards. It's been described by Marc Sands, the paper's marketing director, as "part of a new wave of advertising that is about the truth".

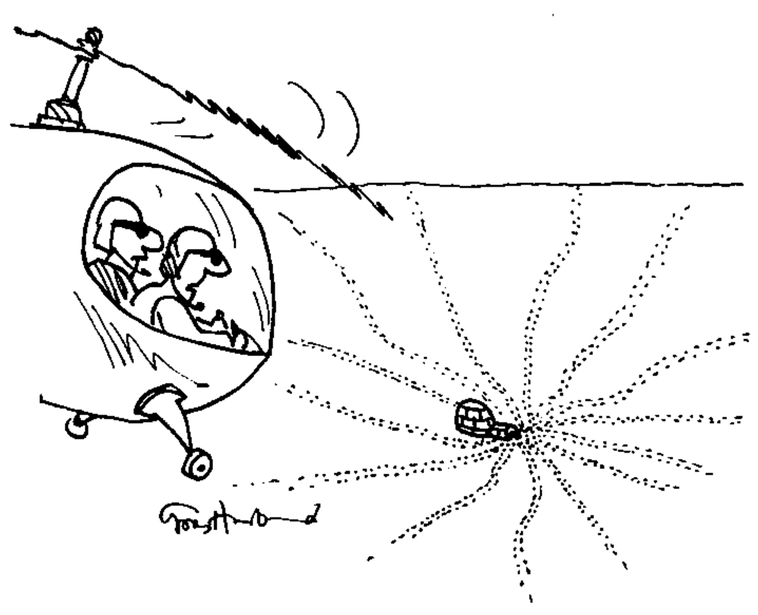
Such flagrant bullshit immediately reminds us that adland's notion of "truth" is one shared only by the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and a cursory glance at what Sands is talking about only makes his soundbite look sillier. The posters, from the paper's new-broom agency Wieden & Kennedy, use lots of squiggly lines and bright colours. They also take the bold step of employing more than one strapline: "Listen to Many, Decide for Yourself", and "Owned by No One. Free to Say Anything". These slogans, say the marketing blurb, are meant to stress the *Guardian*'s "independence" and "plurality of views".

Unfortunately for them, there is already a newspaper out there that has what brand managers call "ownership" of "independence" – it's called the *Independent*, and their "It Is. Are You?" launch campaign made the point with rather more élan. As for "plurality of views", the *Times'* current strap is "Join the Debate". Moreover, back in the Eighties the *Guardian* itself ran a famous campaign in which a skinhead appeared to be attacking an OAP, only to be shown to be saving him from harm. It was called, "Points of View".

So the "new wave" turns out to be rather like the old wave, but with more colour and less heart – which, some would say, is an apt description of the *Guardian*'s current predicament.

THE organising committee of the 2012 Olympics is looking for a beer brand as the last of its nine tier-one domestic sponsors (going rate: £80 million).

Surely there is only one candidate that can give the Olympics' recent financial woes the appropriate gloss? Stella Artois, "Reassuringly Expensive".



"Hello HQ… think we've found the local drug dealer"

Number crunchings

£400m ■ Annual budget of new Serious and Organised Crime Agency

4,000 ■ Officers employed by new Serious and Organised Crime Agency

400 ■ Total prosecutions brought in first year by Serious and Organised Crime Agency

"Actually, establishing a tyranny turned out to be a lot easier than we expected"

Down on the Farm

JUST when we thought the saga of Defra's incompetence over handing out EU farm subsidies could get no worse, it has plumbed new depths of farce.

First it emerged that the bill for this monumental shambles has soared yet again, to a breathtaking £500m, more than half the cost of the Dome. Of this, we must hand over £305m to Brussels as a punishment for Defra's stupendous blunders – one of the larger fines in EU history. So at least our 26 "partners" (when they've stopped giggling behind their hands) can be grateful for our free gift to the EU budget.

Then we had the report from the Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (no mention of agriculture any more), which pinned the blame for this unprecedented cock-up firmly on Margaret Beckett, known to this column since 2001 as Rosa Klebb. Having listened to how Defra came to choose the system whereby farmers in England would be paid their EU money, the MPs were in no doubt that it was Rosa who took the decision to go with what her officials called "the dynamic hybrid" option. This was because (don't laugh) she thought it was the option least likely to result in any "penalties" from Brussels. So at least the MPs were good enough to suggest that Rosa should be fired from whatever job it was she was promoted to.

The most glaring flaw in the MPs' report was their failure to examine the bizarre role in this story of Accenture (aka Arthur Andersen), the consultants hired by Defra for £18m to work out the best way to implement that "dynamic hybrid" option. More than once this column has reported how, when Accenture made a total balls-up of what they had been paid to do, Defra's response was not to fire them and ask for its (our) money back. Astonishingly, it was to give them a further £19m to sort out the mess they themselves had made. When the consultants made just as bad a job the second time this was a major reason why those fines from Brussels rose to £305m. Yet an additional part of the total bill is still the £37m trousered by Accenture, who, after refusing to answer the MPs' questions, have been let completely off the hook.

The final straw has been the revelation that, since our next prime minister refuses to pay a penny towards the "penalty" owed to Brussels, Defra must pay the fine out of its existing budget, which apparently means it is going to have to fire 800 of its own staff. Normally we might cheer at the thought of 800 Defra officials getting the sack, as a just reward for the appalling way most of them have behaved in recent years. But somehow one knows that, when it comes to working out where cuts should fall, the Boy Wonder Miliband and his staff will search round carefully for just those few parts of the Defra empire which are still doing a useful job for the rest of us. All the armies of "climate change co-ordinators" and "carbon footprint inspectors" will be kept on, earning their fabulous salaries, while there will be even less money to pay for such essentials as the maintenance needed by our canals, to prevent breaches in their banks pouring water over miles of countryside. But perhaps if Rosa's caravan happened to be parked in the neighbourhood, justice might be done after all.

'Muckspreader'

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE Belfast Education and Library Board may shut other schools in order to force pupils into the Balmoral High School building, which will otherwise be a deserted ghost school from the end of next term.

Just 154 pupils are currently rattling around the £17m building, which was built with a capacity of 500. As a result of terrible forward-planning on pupil numbers, plans to close the school were announced last summer (*Eye* 1161), just two years after it opened. But as the state-of-the-art facility was built under a private finance initiative, the BELB (and thus local taxpayers) will be liable for annual payments on the redundant building until 2029.

Thus the BELB now says it is exploring "a number of options" for the building, including closing down other schools (ones they still own and therefore don't have to pay an annual charge for) and "moving" them to the unpopular Balmoral site. Gold stars all round.

A TEACHER sacked for providing an outdoor activity centre with a risk assessment of a child with potentially dangerous behaviour problems has been given a long-service award by the education bosses who wrecked her career.

Anne Jago lost her job as deputy head of Painters Ash Primary School after her decision to warn the outdoor centre about the pupil was found to be "insensitive" and "professional misconduct" (*Eye* 1162). The assessment asserted that the child's behaviour was unpredictable, that he refused to follow instructions and couldn't interact safely with other children (important things to know if you're taking a group of children on an activity such as abseiling).

The school held a party in her honour in March and invited Kent education chiefs, who not only had the nerve to attend the function, but brought along a certificate thanking Mrs Jago for her 32 years of teaching service. They didn't give her her job back.

THE new industry-focused "specialised diplomas" for 14 to 19-year-olds are supposed to be ready by next September, but headteachers and education chiefs have serious doubts that the government will hand its homework in on time.

The 145 consortia of schools, colleges and other "training providers" that will offer Diplomas from 2008 were named at the end of March, but MPs on the education select committee were told by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) that there were "great concerns" about the timescale.

The first five diplomas are to be in IT, engineering, health and social care, construction and creative and media. The lowest level is to be equivalent to five GCSEs. Pupils under 16 would end up dividing their time between schools and other venues such as FE colleges, which the NAHT says will cause "huge expense". The Association of School and College Leaders also submitted evidence to the select committee saying that the cost of transport would indeed be substantial in towns and cities and "prohibitive" in rural areas unless more funding is provided.

Meanwhile the minutes of Qualifications and Curriculum Authority board meetings reveal that they, too, have their worries.

"There is a lack of clear overall management of the programme and overall assessment of risk," chief executive Ken Boston recently reported to the QCA, which regulates public exams in the UK. With ministers saying all 14-year-olds will have the option of specialised diplomas by 2010, what could possibly go wrong?

YOUNG OFFENDERS

TEENAGERS are still being dumped in homeless hostel accommodation when released from young offenders' institutions without any safe home to go to, as social services fail to take responsibility for them.

In 2005, *Eye* 1135 revealed how children were released from YOIs straight into homelessness. "J.", a teenager with learning difficulties, was living in social services care when he was sentenced to a year at Ashfield YOI. Because he turned 17 during that year he was taken from prison to a B&B hostel in Cardiff, a city where he knew no one. When Caerphilly Council social services were taken to court over that case, Justice Mundy ruled that their provision had been "hopelessly inadequate".

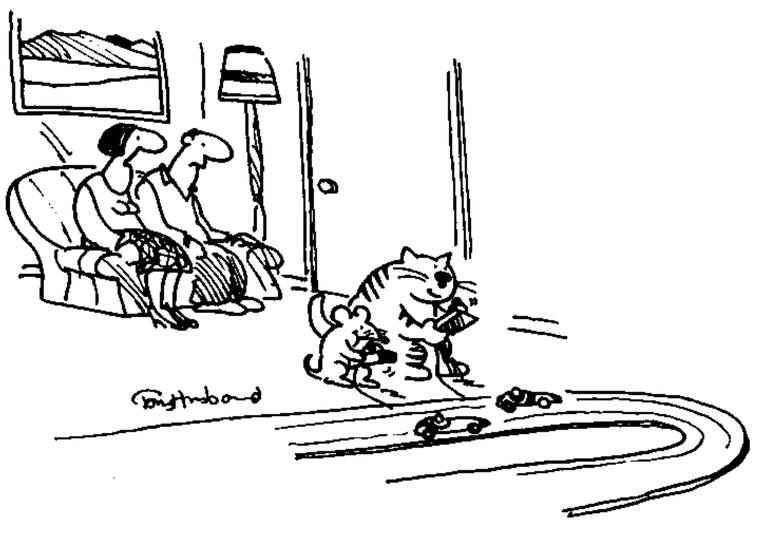
But the same thing has continued to happen to more young people. The Howard League for Penal Reform says it has now encountered more than 100 similar cases of vulnerable children leaving custody who have been neglected by the authorities.

In May, the House of Lords is to hear the case of "M.", a teenage girl who was housed in a series of temporary hostels by Hammersmith and Fulham Council after completing four months in Cookham Wood YOI.

M. had been living with and looking after her mother who was ill with cancer, but her mother was unable to cope with her behaviour and she was asked to leave. While aged 16 and 17 she stayed in a variety of temporary B&B accommodation arranged through the council's housing officers, but she was never taken into care. In 2004, she was convicted of street robbery and in 2005 was put on a supervision order, but she was jailed after failing to turn up for a supervision appointment.

She was released in March 2006, having turned 18 while in Cookham Wood. Had she been in social services care before she turned 18, they would still have had responsibility for her, as a vulnerable young person, until she was 21. Her lawyers say that although M. was housed by the housing department instead, the council did therefore take responsibility for her under the Children Act.

As it was, after her release she was placed in a hostel and then moved twice to other hostels, one of which didn't even provide basics such as plates, cutlery or a kettle. The Howard League says that M. has "limited budgeting or independent living skills, had no activities or pastoral support organised for her and is experiencing enormous difficulty coping alone. These circumstances clearly place her at a high risk of reoffending."



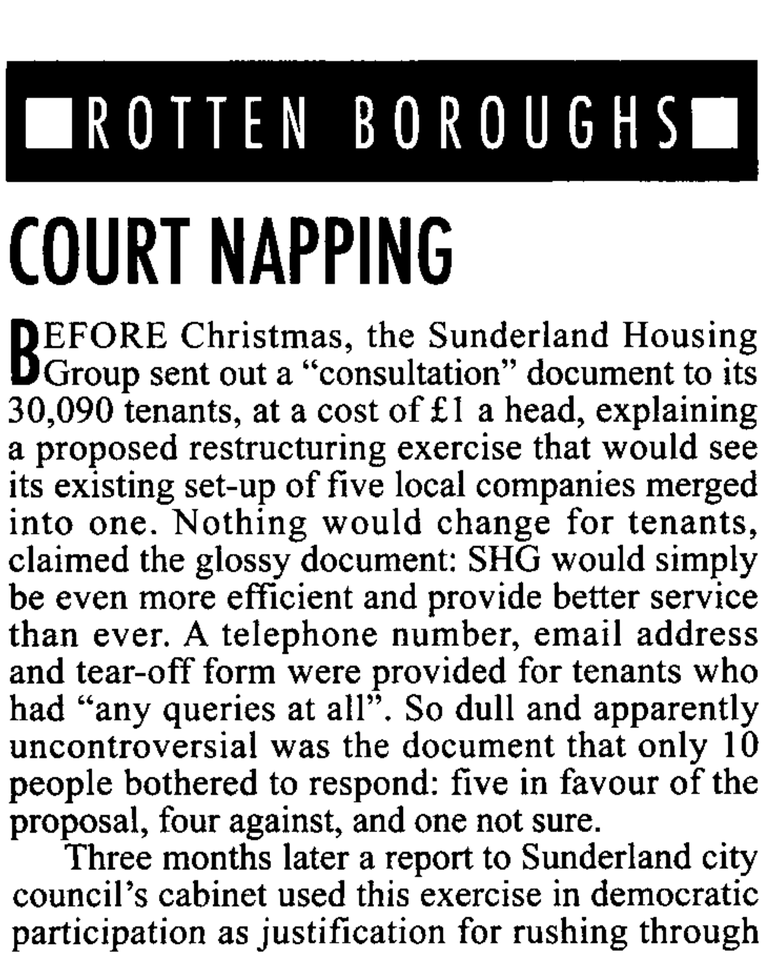
"I hate the way the cat just plays with the mouse when she catches one"

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

COURT NAPPING

BEFORE Christmas, the Sunderland Housing Group sent out a "consultation" document to its 30,090 tenants, at a cost of £1 a head, explaining a proposed restructuring exercise that would see its existing set-up of five local companies merged into one. Nothing would change for tenants, claimed the glossy document: SHG would simply be even more efficient and provide better service than ever. A telephone number, email address and tear-off form were provided for tenants who had "any queries at all". So dull and apparently uncontroversial was the document that only 10 people bothered to respond: five in favour of the proposal, four against, and one not sure.

Three months later a report to Sunderland city council's cabinet used this exercise in democratic participation as justification for rushing through



the restructuring on the nod. However, a number of details not contained in the "consultation" document emerged. Most importantly, changes to SHG's articles of association would assign 51 percent of voting rights to the "parent company", reducing tenants' and independent members' share of votes to 8 percent each (down from 33 percent), with the council's share staying at 33 percent.

This would give SHG a free hand to increase rents to private sector levels, sell off stock or "invest" elsewhere as it pleased. Pressure was put on councillors to give SHG everything it wanted with an unsubstantiated threat to make 400 staff immediately redundant if the changes weren't approved. Furthermore, it was claimed, the restructuring was essential if SHG was to avoid an imminent "substantial" bill for unpaid tax and VAT.

The cabinet docilely voted everything through without discussion, and the city solicitor vetoed an attempt by opposition members to have the issue "called in" for discussion at full council. Last week, however, one worried tenant, Mike Thompson, won a judicial review in the high court of the council's decision on the grounds that tenants were not adequately consulted.

WIKI WITCH

NOT content with putting her distinctive slant on local government media releases, the slippery tentacles of PR guru Lorraine Langham have now been exposed trying to manipulate Wikipedia.

Her Verve Communications consultancy outfit which, er, masterminds publicity for Tower Hamlets council (*Eyes passim*), has received a slap on the wrist for trying to turn the online encyclopaedia into a corporate advertising billboard.

Wikipedia administrators spotted the ruse last month when a user called "VerveKS" posted an entry for "Lorraine Langham" and linked it to Verve's own website. Unaware of Langham's notoriety as the handsomely paid head of "strategic communications" at Tower Hamlets, Wikipedia editors rather sweetly asked "who the heck is she?" and then read VerveKS the riot act. "Wikipedia is not a mere directory of links, nor should it be used for advertising or promotion," they explained. The username would have to change and "inappropriate links" to Verve's website were banned. They also demanded proof that Langham passed the site's "notability" test and asked for at least two "independent" articles about her.

At that point VerveKS changed her username to "Kaswa" – short for Katrina Swanston, a Langham employee who has been "bigging up" other Verve clients on Wikipedia, including Hamish Davidson, boss of an obscure headhunting firm called Rockpools. Kaswa promised to add links to Langham's own articles "which will hopefully highlight her notability".

So far, the material has not arrived, but if Wikipedia does relent, there'll be no shortage of people queuing to make online edits. Such as about how she banned journalists from last year's Tower Hamlets election count for "health and safety reasons"; how she got rid of popular town hall press officer Eileen Short (sister of MP Clare) for spending her spare time campaigning against council home sell-offs (*Eye* 1146); and how she managed to persuade her friends in charge of Tower Hamlets – Britain's second most-deprived borough ¬ to pay her company £1m of public money last year when she originally quoted £250,000 for the work (*Eye* 1177). Happy surfing!

WIGHT KNIGHT

ISLE of Wight council has called in one of the *Eye*'s favourite lawyers, Mark Greenburgh of Wragge & Co., to investigate allegations of dodgy deals between engineers High-Point Rendel (H-PR) and the council over the Undercliff Drive road scheme, budgeted at £5.6m in 2001 and now put at nearly £13m (*Eyes passim*).

Greenbacks has featured in previous Rotten Boroughs columns for his usually botched attempts to get rid of out-of-favour chief executives at councils such as Lincolnshire, Doncaster and N.E. Derbyshire in exchange for staggeringly huge fees. Who better to sort out the Wight mess, which has led to the suspension of "strategic director, economic development and regeneration" Derek Rowell, finance chief Paul Wilkinson and legal eagle John Lawson? They were followed by two lesser mortals, head of highways Steve Matthews and his sidekick Nick Gallin.

When the specially convened investigatory and disciplinary committee held its first meeting on 28 March, chairman Cllr George Brown, a former Cambridge boat race blue, rowed into the fray with the uncompromising announcement: "Some of this matter has been conducted in some fairly dark corners." A change from the usual "lessons have been learned" guff Islanders have come to expect.

He was followed by Greenburgh, who has been hired for £150,000-plus. He and his colleagues had already carted 20 crates of documents out of County Hall to sift through, he declared. Just in time, apparently. Matthews and Gallin, he revealed, had been suspended "in relation to an apparent attempt to interfere with the investigation in terms of removal of documents requested by my team from the files."

I-SPY

N. Yorks Moors

Submitted by John Simmonds.

£10 paid for similar submissions.

(SAE required for return of photographs)

BAY WATCH

TORBAY council places such emphasis on the protection of personal and private information about its staff and the town's residents that its "data protection code of practice" runs to 35 pages.

So the council's 6,500 employees were not best pleased to discover last month that records containing their full names, addresses, salary and bank details have gone "missing" – twice. The data first went awol last December, but staff were not informed until three months later. Instead of sending its annual statistical return on staff to the Audit Commission by recorded or special delivery, as has happened in the past, the council put it all on a CD which went in the general post – and never turned up. Weeks later the Audit Commission asked why the council had not submitted the annual return. Without trying to find out what had happened to the first one, a second CD was dispatched in the general post, and it too went missing

A hotline has been set up to reassure staff, who have been advised to check credit references and examine their bank statements closely.

● NORWICH city council's press office is being run by a dynamic new duo: former *Eastern Daily Press* reporter Lynette Alcock and ex-*Norwich Evening News* hack Richard Balls. Sadly for connoisseurs of schoolboy humour, Ms Alcock, known hitherto by her maiden name, has told colleagues that she will be using her married name, Day, in future.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON — KNIFE & PACKER

WHAT'S WITH THE SUNGLASSES, JEZ? IT'S POURING RAIN...
OH THEY'RE NOT FOR THE SUN, IT'S JUST THAT I'M MEETING QUIN IN TEN MINUTES...
HE GOT HIS TEETH WHITENED LAST WEEK AND THE DENTIST GOT A BIT CARRIED AWAY!

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE BONNER Street School in Bethnal Green, whose fate I discussed in *Eye* 1171, no longer stands. This handsome Board School could perfectly well have continued in educational use or, if surplus to requirements, been converted into flats. It was demolished merely for the convenience of the contractors rebuilding the adjacent school under Gordon Brown's favoured PFI.

This government seems to think its policies are justified merely by the act of throwing huge sums of public money around, and regardless of whether the consequences are desirable or practicable. So it is with education. The government proposes under its Building Schools for the Future scheme to spend billions rebuilding or modernising every secondary school in Britain, followed by every primary school. The idiotic observation by Mrs Thatcher – that it was a scandal that half the nation's children were being educated in Victorian buildings – seems to hold sway with our present Prime Minister. Yet being educated in the 19th century architecture of Fettes seems to have done Blair no harm, and David Cameron is surely far from damaged by close acquaintance with the historic buildings of Eton (Gordon Brown's alma mater, Kirkaldy High School, was, however, largely built in the 1950s: what does that tell us?).

The truth is that Victorian school buildings were not only better built and full of character but are more practical and flexible than so many of the schools built over the past 60 years, while as for the exciting new secondary schools built in the past five years (usually under PFI), a survey by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment found that the design of half of them was "mediocre" or "poor". Last November, a Victorian Society conference on the future of historic school buildings concluded that not only should an audit be made before hundreds are needlessly demolished, but that high standards of design can be found in old school buildings as well as new ones. The society's director, Ian Dungavell, remarked: "The conference showed that many of the schools of the future have already been built. They've been standing for over a hundred years, often with very little maintenance to keep them going. They are versatile and durable and people care about them." Not that this dim and philistine government is likely to listen: PFI is good for business.

ONE SUCH school building stands near the Thames in Glebe Place, overlooking the garden of Chelsea Old Rectory. Built shortly before the First World War, it is a handsome structure of red brick in a "Queen Anne" style that is a complement to its near neighbour, the famous house designed by William Morris's great friend, the architect Philip Webb, for the painter G.P. Boyce. For some years, this building served as the Jamhiriya School for Libyan Muslims; now it is derelict. Soundly constructed, with those big multi-paned sash-windows so typical of the Board Schools, it is just the sort of urban building which has been successfully converted elsewhere into flats.

Needless to say, it is proposed for destruction. Mainstride Ltd wants to replace it (and the former school playground) by a development of 21 luxury flats, and has hired Foster & Partners on the assumption that the gilded name of Norman Foster will overcome all opposition. Fortunately, it hasn't. The Royal Borough of Kensington 'n' Chelsea has twice rejected the redevelopment proposals, and Mainstride has now lodged an appeal. Perhaps the good councillors took a look across the river and noticed Albion Riverside, a recently completed 11-storey apartment building of quite remarkable vulgarity designed by the Foster firm. Full of gratuitous lumpen curves and with lots of balconies so its well-heeled occupants can have a nice view of Chelsea Old Church and Cheyne Walk, this overweening and repulsive piece of architecture appears to be made of tin. Something like that would scarcely be a suitable neighbour for Webb's West House and Chelsea Old Rectory, let alone in a conservation area.

But there is more. The developers also have their eyes on Inner Court next door, a complex of six flats and offices tucked away off Old Church Street. Demolishing this would provide traffic access from the west, and the site would also be used to build the six units of "affordable housing" proposed as a sop to the planning process. So six existing flats will be destroyed to build six new ones merely to get planning permission. Unfortunately for Mainstride and Foster, Inner Court is really rather interesting. Completed in 1972, it not only works well but is the sole executed design by the distinguished architectural theorist and historian Joseph Rykwert, who observes: "Buildings are not eternal but what is being put forward is not very inspiring. It's one of Norman Foster's off-the-production-line jobs."

Rykwert's Inner Court

Professor Rykwert is being polite. What is being proposed is gratuitous, discordant and greedy. One day, historians can enjoy themselves working out which of the many much-vaunted metallic structures which litter not just Britain but the world and which were designed by this huge and sinister international firm are in fact the works of Milord Norman himself. One clue will be whether or not an extra fee was charged for their being based on sketches by the master himself. Not in this case, I suspect.

'Piloti'

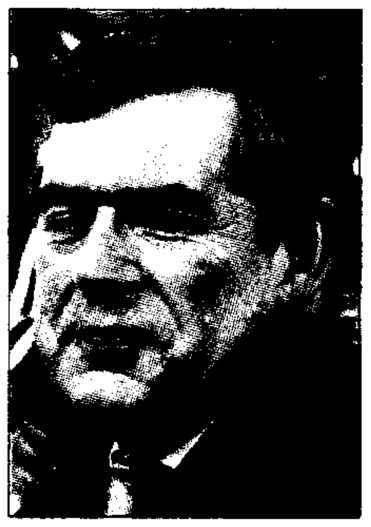
YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Slagged off for commercialism, exhibitionism and shameless self-promotion...
Yes, it's good to see the Surrealists back in fashion.
V AND A SURREAL TREAT

Letters

Lookalike



Sir,

I have been struck by the extraordinary resemblance between the late Daily Mirror pensions thief, Robert Maxwell, and the current Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Do you happen to know if, by any chance, they are related?

Yours sincerely,
NICHOLAS BARRETT,

Via email.

Thanks to access to free transport, provided by the initiative of the Labour led Assembly Government, our standard of loving has improved immeasurably,

Letter to Llantrisant Observer

Finger prince

Sir,

Your article on Prince Harry is tasteless on a number of fronts.

a. It is written by your Military Correspondent "Victoria Cross". (Words fail me.) b. It refers to the "Booze & Royals Regiment" – a well known regiment of the line. I wonder what past and present serving members think of that description? Have I become an "old blimp"?

Whether he was guilty of the conduct you allege does not concern me – by modern standards his alleged conduct would not normally raise an eyebrow – what does concern me is that you continually target him.

Members of the Royal Family seem to be fair game for snide remarks (they are damned if they do and damned if they don't) – normally this is excused on the grounds that they are "privileged". Personally I think they are born with a burden they are forced to carry for the rest of their lives. I wouldn't change places for a king's ransom.

Give the lad a chance. Let us hope that he and his comrades return safely from this appalling "involvement" in Iraq.

Yours,
DON ROBERTS,

The Wirral.

Schnoring...

Sir,

Richard Desmond may well be a "tight bastard" (Eye 1181), but alas that is not what "schnorrer" means in Yiddish. It actually means a beggar, one who lives on handouts. Experienced schnorrers also tend to complain about the quality – as well as quantity – of these handouts...

MIRA BAR-HILLEL,

Via email.

Eggs Benedictine

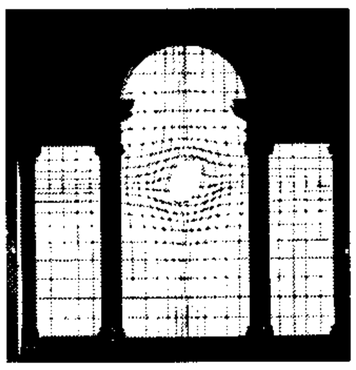
Sir,

I, as an Anglican priest who hasn't been to Liverpool for several years, can't comment on the specific building of the restaurant in the Cathedral. I can, though, on the theological assumptions behind Piloti's report. Firstly Christ gets criticism for enjoying food, drink and celebration, and it is from this that there is a long history of hospitality in the Christian Church, most notably in the Benedictine movement. This is shown in the number of new initiatives that have sprung up to make good use of the buildings, whether it be the transformation of an ancient church in Worcester for the homeless or the town centre church of All Saints in Hereford. Piloti comments that Cathedrals are for "religion", whatever that means. They aren't, they are for the glory of God, and to bring in his kingdom, and that sense of hospitality is key. Of course we must also offer space for quiet prayer, but the two go together. Finally we must resist the most dangerous comment about having children screaming, and making parents feel guilty about bringing their children into a church or cathedral, instead we show the welcome that Christ showed.

REVEREND CHRIS GOBLE,

Great Brington, Northampton.

Hole in one



Sir,

Although I have the disadvantage of only seeing a small black and white picture of the St Martin in the Fields' stained glass window, I must disagree with Piloti's dismissal. I think the artist has captured the vital essence of today's culture: some vandal has thrown a brick through the window, and the authorities can't be bothered to repair it. Spot on, Shirazeh.

MIKE TAYLOR,

Borough Green, Kent.

Higher seating plan

Sir,

The cartoon included on page 17 of Eye 1181 serves only to illustrate the artist's ignorance of scripture.

He appears to suggest that with the benefit of hindsight, Jesus would have excluded Judas to a side table at the Last Supper.

Had Mr Mike Barfield researched John's Gospel, then he would realise (as any school-child would know) that Jesus knew of Judas' betrayal before the Last Supper took place and on the same note Jesus had forgiven Judas for that betrayal before he had even betrayed him.

Therefore the notion of Judas being excluded to a side table had Jesus had the benefit of hindsight is very misguided.

I am not being pedantic, just factual.

Yours sincerely,

LAWRENCE R. GREGORY,

Stretford.

"If you can't beat 'em..."

Lent credibility

Sir,

I have just read your review "St Jeffrey's New Testament" (Eye 1181). Recently a friend dropped a copy at my house as I was recovering from an operation and I found it perfect Lenten reading. I am a cradle Catholic. The traditional Christ, miracle working, suffering, dying, rising from the dead emerged triumphantly from its pages while Peter is the leader of the first Christians who believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. The fictional Judas didn't believe this, of course, but then, so what?

Your reviewer found it hard to understand why a distinguished Catholic theologian should link up with Archer. I think I know why. The SDB after his name stands for Salesian of Don Bosco. Don Bosco was a nineteenth-century priest who devoted his life to caring for boys who would be described today as part of the underclass. The congregation he founded, the SDBs, continue his work throughout the world and continue to focus on youths of the non-public-school variety. I was educated by them myself. Fr Frank Maloney SDB has doubtless a life mission to spread knowledge of the gospel, especially to those who would not normally be consulting his magisterial commentaries on Scripture.

In your eagerness to have a pop at Archole, I think you missed the point of his co-author and, quite mistakenly, I think, read the book as "a denial of the deepest beliefs of Catholics" (a statement which astonished me).

On the matter of Judas' suicide, I don't think your reviewer bothered to read the scholarly and rather nuanced notes at the back of the book.

It may be a daft review but long live Private Eye and, as a Catholic I have so say, God Bless.

Yours etc.

KEVIN DEAN,

Rishton, Blackburn.

Leg-acy over

Sir,

On the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, commentators have been debating the best way to come to terms with the legacies of Empire.

Do you by any chance have a photograph in your archives showing a Briton embracing reconciliation with a member of our former colonies that may provide some inspiration?

Yours,

NEIL MCARTHUR,

Via email.

Up-the-duff records

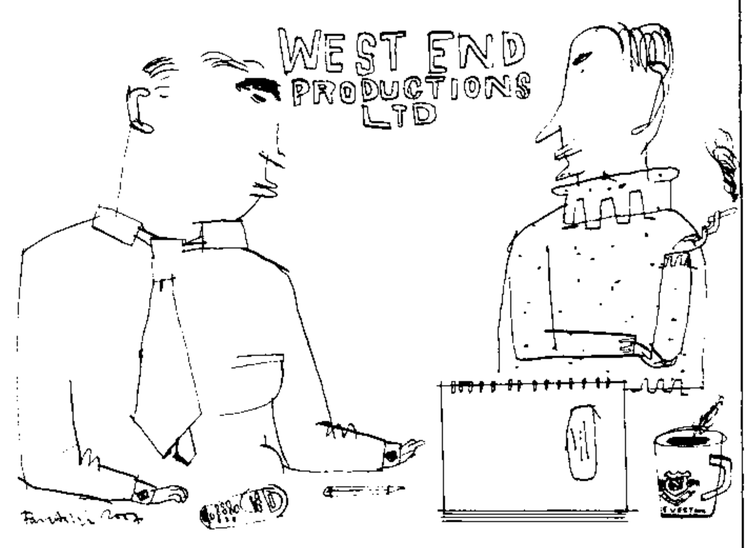
Sir,

Whilst agreeing with Belinda Phipps (Eye 1181) that maternity patients take their records with them, which is an efficient system, it works very well until you decide to exercise your right to change maternity unit (in our case from Oxford John Radcliff to Northampton), when the consultant will then refuse to hand back your wife's files stating that they are "hospital property", the nurse stating that "the hospital needs them to protect itself in case anything goes wrong". The photocopies we eventually received after a stressful exchange in a packed waiting area were both incomplete and illegible and that's after sending them back twice in an attempt to get a legible copy of the full record. My heavily pregnant wife was in tears, so much for patient care. Northampton were excellent and we now have a happy, healthy baby boy.

JON BOWD,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"This script would make a really great musical. I know... why don't we do it as a play?"

Misdiagnosis

Sir,

In your understandable haste to rubbish yet again the Department of Health for claiming disproportionate cost as the reason for rejecting your FoI request for information on PFI affordability (Eye 1180) you miss the bigger point. If the DoH doesn't have this information readily to hand then just how do ministers make informed decisions on current and proposed PFI deals? If history is anything to go by they don't make informed decisions (or PFI deals would be dead) and we're saddled with the consequences for decades to come.

STEVE DENTON,

Cuddington, Cheshire.

Nazi piece of work

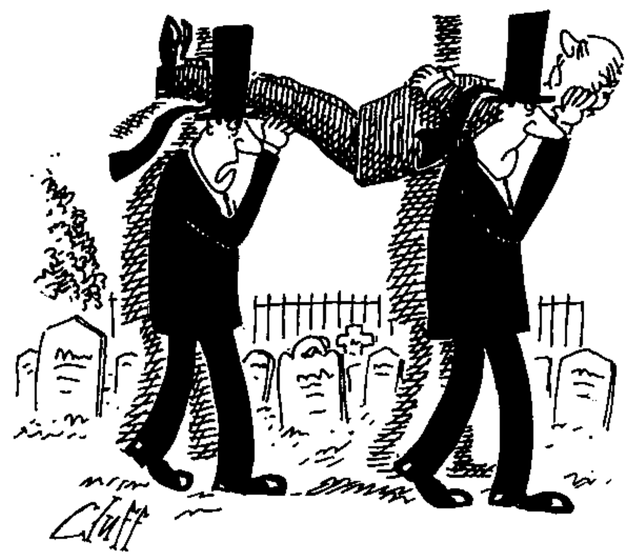
Sir,

I read with interest the letter from Glyn Morris in Eye 1181 on the Federation of Conservative Students behaviour in UCW Aberystwyth in the late 1980s. I was also a student at UCW Aberystwyth but in the early 1970s (1970 to 73 to be precise). The majority of students then were moderate & relatively well behaved apart from a small number who supported the editor of the Student Magazine in 1972. A certain Neil Hamilton (for it was he!). In those days of student grants and democracy the editor of the Student Union Mag was elected and the hustings for this election were fascinating. Mr Hamilton paraded forth supported by henchmen in brown shirts and jackboots in a theatrical pastiche of a Nazi rally. Amazingly Neil was elected and renovated the tired left wing Student mag into a "splendid" right wing organ with masthead styled on the eagle emblem of the Third Reich (great stuff!). So it seems that the right moron tendency in UCW Aberystwyth had its roots further back in history (as did the previous Tory Government).

Yours sincerely,

IAN JEROME,

Penge, London.



"We're all in favour of cutting down packaging, but this is ridiculous..."

Seen the light

Sir,

Dumb Britain, issue 1181

Eamonn Holmes: What travels at 300 million miles a second?

Contestant: A cheetah.

You are the dumb ones. The speed of light is 300 million meters per second; 300 million miles is 1,600 times the speed of light, anything that goes that fast is indeed a liar and a cheater.

DAFYDD ap THOMAS,

Cardiff

P.S. Even the Starship Enterprise at Warp Factor 10 can only do 1,000 times light-speed.

● (Many thanks for the dozens of letters rightly complaining about this typographical error. Ed.)

No kidding

Sir,

Oh come on. A wrong answer by a contestant on Junior Mastermind (Dumb Britain)? The day you decide a ten-year-old is a suitable target for your supercilious sneering is, I'm afraid, the day I decide not to give you any more of my money.

PHIL DAVIES,

Via email.

Roger that!

Sir,

I read with interest Music & Musicians in the current edition of your esteemed organ. Lunchtime O'Boulez seems to think that Roger Wright, Controller Of BBC Radio 3, has no friends.

I have photographic evidence that he has at least two. I wonder if you have any other photos on file that show media celebrities with their good friends? (No. Ed.)

Yours,

GEOFF WODES,

Via email.

Leeky metaphor

Sir,

Will Greenwood's quote in Colemanballs (Eye 1181) was incorrect. He actually said Wales, not Scotland, were staring down the barrel of a wooden spoon.

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL AYLMER,

Glasgow.

"She's just seeing if the Alphabetti Spaghetti's ready"

Original sinner

Sir,

Remote Controller was wrong to ascribe the origin of reality TV in this country to the first series of the BBC's Castaway. It's a terrible burden to carry, but in fact I was the guilty party 31 years ago. This is Will Smith, the man behind ITV's I'm A Celebrity, interviewed on the subject in the Guardian: "I remember on BBC Nationwide their reporter James Hogg went off to a Hebridean island and tried to survive and slowly went nuts while filming his every move. I think it's probably the first bit of reality TV ever shown on British TV."

JAMES HOGG,

Melbourn, Cambs.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"After that goal, Scotland have the bit between their legs... I mean their tail between their teeth."

Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Michael Charalambous)

"And that's a can of worms out of the bottle."

Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Adrian Stannard)

"The world's tallest man got married today in China, after a search for a bride that stretched around the world."

Radio 4
(Nick Procter)

"The hypocrisy is on the other foot..."

PHIL WOOLAS MP, Radio 4
(Pete Bowman)

"Because Heather Mills has a prosthetic leg I think she has a lot of support."

Interviewee, GM-TV
(Ray McDowell)

SOLUTIONS INTERNATIONAL

"Life Paths: Simplified Funeral and Cremation Solutions" – *funerals* **(US)**

"HSBC: A new world of Shariah compliant banking solutions" – *bank* **(United Arab Emirates)**

"Workplace Refreshment Solutions" – *water coolers* **(Australia)**

"Sitting Solutions" – *furniture shop* **(Bulgaria)**

"Harwood Andrews Family Lawyers: personal separation solutions" – *divorces* **(Australia)**

"Mowasalat: a world-wide recognised brand in the provision of Integrated Ground Transport Solutions" – *buses* **(Qatar)**

"Varibel hooroplossing [trans: Varibel Hearing Solution]" – *hoortoestel* [trans: Hearing Aid] **(Netherlands)**

All submitted by readers

Cash for quickies

Sir,

A propos Hackwatch (Eye 1181) about the Joneses. Might you have got the whole thing wrong when you write: "... what on earth [else] would these self-absorbed half-wits have to write about?"

I expect a sharper degree of insight from you. I suspect that Mr and Mrs Jones laugh heartily all the way to the bank before celebrating between the sheets, over the kitchen table and/or in the shower. What more amusing way of earning a few pennies than writing such tripe – done in two minutes an item – could you devise?

Disappointedly,

HELMUT KARLE,

St Leger sous Beuvray, France.

Carmelite riflers

Sir,

In response to Jeremy Corbyn MP who thinks "there's no evidence to the contrary, either" that white ladies congregated on Whiteladies Road to buy black boys, there is. The original "white ladies" were medieval Carmelite nuns who had a nunnery on the site of the present Territorial Army (opposite the BBC) on modern-day Whiteladies Road. They feature in the local council records when the Sisters were given permission to raise funds by begging for alms from passing travellers. This right had to be rescinded when they interpreted it as a right to attack anyone who passed and demand money with menaces.

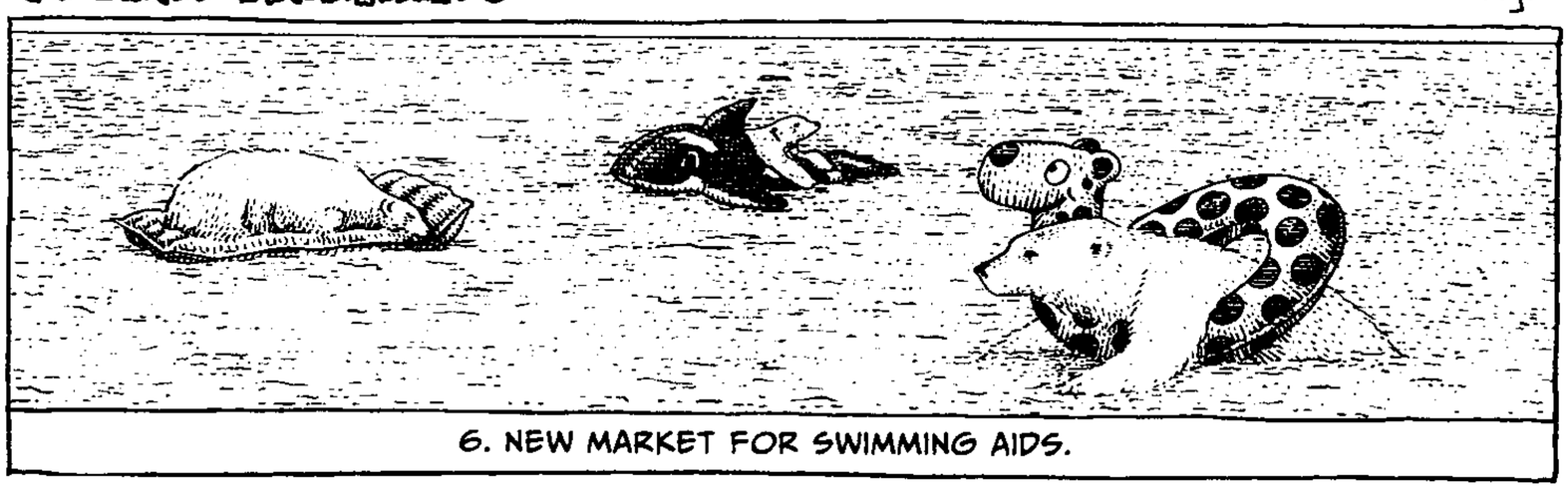
Nearby Blackboy Hill, far from being named for the black boys sold to the white ladies, was named after a public house originally called "The Blackamore's Head". This may date back to the time of the Crusades when crusaders had trouble finding suitable souvenirs to bring back and sometimes settled for a severed Moor's head. There is what may be an urban myth that some of these heads were actually used as inn signs.

Perhaps Mr Corbyn might like to acquire a copy of my book, "Satan's Kingdom: Bristol and the Transatlantic Slave Trade", to catch up on some of that evidence that he hasn't come across yet about slave ownership in Bristol.

I'm sure Stephen Williams would be delighted to help him find one.

PIP JONES,

Via email.



Letter from **Ascension**

from Our Own Correspondent

NO ONE 25 years ago needed to ask where Ascension was. Television screens mapped daily how the Falklands Task Force was supplied via our volcanic, sub-tropical island home – a mid-Atlantic British territory. For a time, Wide-awake Airfield was the world's busiest airstrip. So how were islanders rewarded for this support?

We were taken for granted as "contract workers", i.e. on low pay. In this 19th century version of serfdom, the island was run as a "company store" serving a committee of "users" – the MoD, the US Air Force, Cable and Wireless, BBC Relay Station and GCHQ. No Ascension representatives were invited to events marking the end of the south Atlantic war, for which we provided key civilian support – including as volunteers on board the Royal Mail ship *St Helena*.

And now we are in crisis. London promised a new future for Ascension, but changed its mind. Britain's democratic values have been shown up as a sham by the Island Councillors, who resigned on 15 March stating that "not only were our hopes misplaced … we [were] misled and misinformed at every step of the way".

Reform had begun with Labour's white paper in 1998, called "Partnership for Progress and Prosperity – a New Relationship with the Overseas Territories". Whitehall's plan for better governance was then set out in 2000 in a document titled "Ascension Island: Into the New Millennium", which explained why HMG felt "the time for change" had arrived. The British government apparently felt that "the civil rights of people living on Ascension must be improved. At present they have no locally elected representation on the Island, no residence rights, and no rights to lease or own land." The system was "no longer appropriate" and "the Users" would prefer to hand over responsibility for services; if Ascension were run by those who lived there it would "offer better prospects for enhancing the economies of Ascension and St Helena".

By 2002, change was under way. Taxation was introduced, then the first Island Council was elected (an order that perhaps reflected whose interests really came first). The FCO start drafting legislation on rights of abode and a property register.

Then, late in 2005, a delegation from the FCO and MoD told the Island Council to ditch their 2000 blueprint. On 20 January last year, an extraordinary letter reached the Island Council from Lord Triesman, minister of state in the FCO and nominally in charge of policy in the Overseas Territories (in reality strings are pulled by officials in DfID, the MoD, the Treasury and the FCO – in that order).

Lord Triesman told the Council that he had to "balance the aspirations of those living and working on Ascension Island against the risks to the UK in terms of contingent liabilities and security and developmental costs". Permanent rights of abode and rights of property "would constitute a very fundamental change… and could not fail to bring an unacceptable level of risk to the UK. I have therefore concluded that the right of abode and the establishment of the right to purchase property will not be developed."

But the real opponent of normal civil society was not Lord Triesman, nor the governor of St Helena and Dependencies, nor indeed Ascension's hapless administrator. So who was it? Look no further than a prime candidate to become deputy leader of the Labour party: Hilary Benn, currently secretary of state for international development. It was Benn's officials who came up with the cock-and-bull arguments about "contingent liabilities" that made the reforms proposed by HMG in 2000 and begun in 2002 into changes opposed by HMG in 2005.

Ascension voters may use the general election for a new Council on 1 May to show that Hilary Benn and Lord Triesman are the real liabilities. So, New Labour faces electoral meltdown not just in Scotland and Wales: the natives are rising in the pink bits as well.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"The flesh trade isn't as elusive as people might think," Amanda Euringer told her readers in British Columbia, "and human body parts are easily available online, for the right price. I recently visited the Coriell Institute's website, saw a foreskin fibroblast for sale, and put it in my shopping cart for a cost of $85.00. A fibroblast is a piece of human skin that's used as a culture to grow other skin or cells, like human yoghurt kits. One foreskin can be used for decades to produce miles of skin, and can generate as much as $100,000 in fees from all the fibroblasts that are created from those original skin cells.

"One of the most publicized examples of the foreskin-for-sale trend involves a skin cream promoted by Oprah Winfrey. SkinMedica is a face cream that costs over $100 for a 63-oz bottle, and is used by many celebrities, such as Winfrey and Barbara Walters, as an alternative to cosmetic surgery. On Winfrey's show, the doctor promoting SkinMedica cream warned that some people may have ethical issues regarding the use of a product that is made from the derivative of foreskins. Why? Because the foreskins come from the circumcisions of babies, and male circumcision is now a controversial topic. In a discussion, one person asked 'if the cream was made from the by-product of baby Afro-American clitoral skin, would Oprah still be promoting it?' There's no answer to that question on Winfrey's website, and she has declined to give me an interview." *(The Tyee [Canada], 9/2/07. Spotter: George Howell)*

– o –

"Buddhist monks are not allowed to harm any living creature," Venerable Boon Keng told reporters at the Hong Hock See Temple on Penang Island, "and we think the poisonous fire ants have realised this. They know we cannot kill them, so they have chosen our temple as their home, and there is nothing we can do. At the moment, it is overrun with them.

"Last year, one disciple used a vacuum cleaner to suck up some of the ants, then released them safely in the forest. He removed thousands of them, but the problem still remains. The sting of a fire ant is highly toxic, and several monks have been rushed to hospital after being bitten, but we have to respect all living things. So when an ant drops on us, we do not swat it, or flick it away. We just gently shake, and hope it falls off. But if anyone has any idea how to solve the problem, please contact the temple on 04-228-0503." (Malaysia Star, 12/3/07. Spotter: David Dallison)

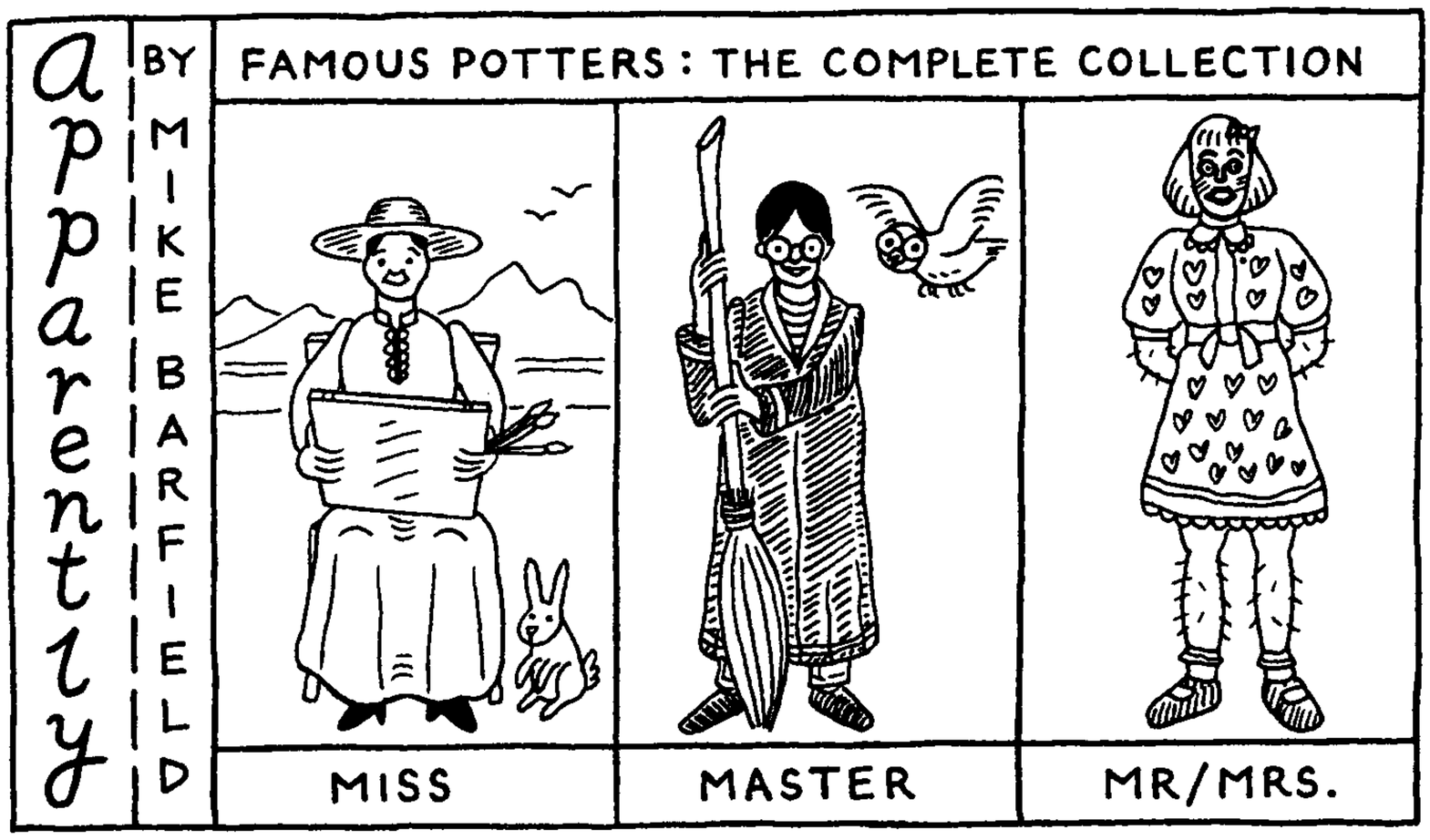
– o –

"I am art. 'Polpette al grasso di Marco' is art. Eat me and the art-devouring public will finally be satisfied," Marco Evarissti told a press conference at the Vitacura Art Gallery in Chile. "In preparation for this piece, I underwent minor liposuction, and had a small amount of fat removed from around my stomach. Then I prepared and fried forty-eight meatballs, using that same fat from my own body. In essence, I have cut off a piece of myself, just to consume it again, but what I am doing is not cannibalism. You are not a cannibal if you eat art."

After publicly consuming eight of the

meatballs which he had fried in his own fat (to the musical accompaniment of composer Henning Christiansen), Evarissti offered the remaining forty meatballs for sale in cans, at $4,000 for ten. He also introduced another controversial piece, consisting of six human faeces covered in gold taken from the teeth of Jewish holocaust victims. "Shit is waste," he told reporters, "but it's also a human creation. My art is a political act. My grandmother died in a concentration camp, and the gold from her very teeth forms part of this holy shit. My work may disturb you greatly, but my intention is to provoke introspection and challenge moral taboos. That's why I do it."

Evarissti is best known internationally for a piece involving live fish in working food blenders, which scandalised the Chilean art world six years ago. *(The Santiago Times, 12/1/07. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

As we all know, it is often a great mistake to dwell too much on the past and go on about things that took place a long time ago!

"Forward not backward" has always been my motto!

And, goodness me, there's more than enough on my plate to worry about than what may or may not have happened ten years ago!

So when people asked me what I thought about our treasurer Mr Brown apparently making some mistake about his calculations over parish funds way back in 1997, my natural response was to say "forget it, mate, we've moved on – or hadn't you noticed?".

But sometimes, you know, our first reactions aren't always the ones to be trusted.

After all, what Mr Brown had done was quite a serious matter.

It seems that, when no one was looking, he had taken a very large sum of money out of the various funds we put aside to help our senior citizens in their twilight years.

And, what's more, it now turns out that a lot of senior colleagues in the Accounts Department strongly advised Mr Brown that it would be quite wrong to steal other people's money in this way – particularly when it was money they themselves had put aside for their old age!

Imagine what it must have felt like, if you were an elderly couple, huddled over one bar of your electric fire, only to discover that you could no longer afford even that one bar, as the winter wind whistled outside, rattling the window panes... and all thanks to one person – Mr Brown.

It's not a very pretty picture, is it?

All your life you've been working away, secure in the knowledge that when finally the day came for you to enjoy a well-earned retirement, you and your partner would have a nice little nest-egg to see you

through, with possibly the odd Mediterranean cruise thrown in, or walking holiday in the Pyrenees to keep you fit and well in the so-called Third Age!

And then suddenly all these dreams are shattered!

Not much hope now of sailing down the Nile! Even a trip to the park to feed the ducks is a luxury you can no longer afford!

Who could blame such a couple if they were to heap curses on the head of the author of all their woes, and were to tell all their friends that such a man was not suitable to be vicar?

Which brings me to my fourth and final point. As I have already said, I have no wish to rake over the ashes of the past.

But when evidence comes to light that a very serious criminal offence has been committed by someone we have all trusted, then might it not be rather more sensible for PC Yates to arrest Mr Brown, rather than hovering about in the vicarage shrubbery with his binoculars?

Just a thought!

Yours, Tony

APOLOGY

■ The Vicar would like to apologise for the delay in converting the crypt into a 24/7 Supercasino. I would like to make it clear that although Mrs Jowell is in no way to blame, it is entirely her fault. Those parishioners who were looking forward to getting into debt, losing their houses and having their children taken into care, will have to wait a few more weeks until I can sort it out with the planning department responsible. Sorry! T.B.

NOTICE

There will be a service of thanksgiving for the release of the hostages after the vicar's intercessions. The Order of Service will be as follows:

Opening Hymn

"For Those In Peril On The Disputed Sea"

Address By The Vicar

Theme: The Power of Blair to bring about a miracle.

Celebratory Hymn

"Now Thank We All Our Vicar"

Grand Parade of 14 Sea Scouts and one Guide in headscarf

All: Rejoice! Rejoice!
Vicar: And again I say 'Rejoice!'

Dismissal

Vicar: Mrs Beckett, you're fired.
Organ Music: Exit of the Queen of Defra (arr. Handel)

**Come early to make sure of your seat! T.B.*

Parish Profile No.2

As the former very popular and successful head of our Neighbourhood Watch, Charles has many outstanding qualities (and I don't just mean his ears!). He has a deep and abiding faith in himself, and a firm conviction that he is the man to take the parish forward, rather than, say, a rather dour Scotsman who has just been caught with his hand in the parish poor box.

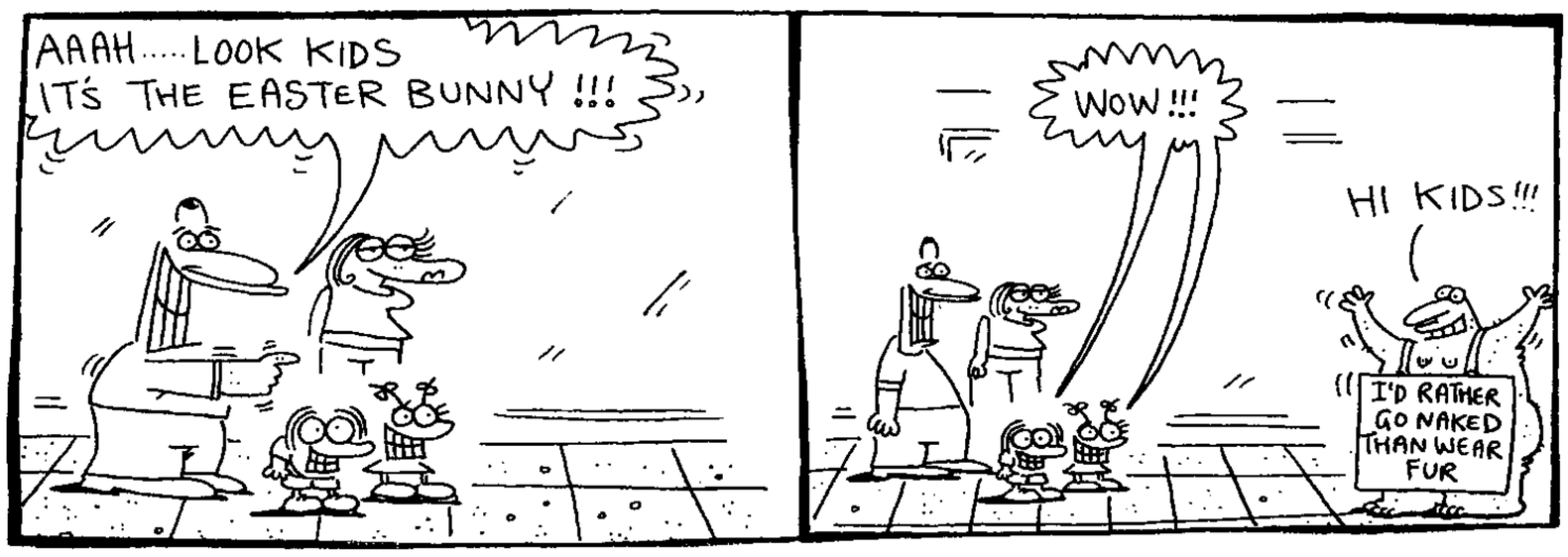
I freely admit that there have been times when Charles and I have not exactly seen eye to eye, and I may even have sacked him from the PCC for gross incompetence. But let's not dwell on the past, shall we? Let's move forward and concentrate on Charles's plus points – ie, that he is not Gordon! T.B.

It Came from Outer Space
4.20PM FILM4

Independent

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



WORLD WAR CUP

ENGLAND TEAM KNOCKED OUT BY NO-HOPERS IRAN

by Our Cricketing Staff W.G. Disgrace

The England Squad in their smart-casual new kit designed by Giorgio Ahmanidinejacket

THE ENGLAND sailing team flew home today after a shock defeat at the hands of the 100-1 outsiders Iran.

Said a disappointed skipper Captain Cornwall, "We had the firepower and the talent, but on the day we failed to focus. We are gutted obviously but to give the Iranians credit they did play a blinder, especially Ahmadinejad."

Barmy Ahmadinejad

He continued, "The media had written him off as a clown but there was nothing funny about the way he tied our team up and bamboozled us with his superior spin."

As the team flew back into Heathrow to be greeted by the Prime Minister there were some tough questions to answer about their performance.

Caught Behind

Why did they give in so easily? Had they been properly prepared? Were they too over confident?

These are the urgent issues which must be addressed as we prepare for the next World War.

Late score: England 15 all out (Iran stopped play)

'I NEVER MET WILSON' Marcia's Shock Claim

by Our BBC Staff **Michael White-Flag**

LADY FALKENDER, formerly Marcia Williams, claimed today that she had never met the Prime Minister who she served as private and political secretary for 30 years.

Speaking yesterday from the Lavender Old Peoples Home in Kagan Lane she said, "The BBC have been trying to portray me as someone who worked for Harold Wilson.

"This is an appalling slur and it is a great relief to me that the BBC have given me a huge cheque to see me through my declining years."

No Wheen, No Fee

This was a reference to the rumoured £7 million that the BBC has agreed to pay Lady Falkender for mentioning her name in various news bulletins over the last 40 years.

Said a spokesman for the BBC, "We are glad to have had this opportunity to put the record straight and we are delighted to hand over this enormous cheque to Lady Falkender's lawyers, Messrs Carter-Fuck and Partners for no good reason at all."

Late News

The late Mr Carter-Fuck is to receive a posthumous peerage from the late Lord Wilson of Gannex for services to censorship.

Join the Debate

Which of these jokes would you most like to see in a bubble on the above picture?

a) Wilson: Any chance of a Falkender?

b) Marcia: Is that a pound in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?

c) Wilson: (smoking pipe not shown in picture) I like a bit of old shag.

Email us now on **wislonfalkbender@naughtygnome.co.uk**

That Carter-Fuck Bill in Full

For writing threatening letter to BBC	**£300,000**
For putting letter in envelope	**£200,000**
For stamp	**32p**
For senior partner's time in licking stamp @ £40,000 per hour x 3	**£120,000**
For accepting huge cheque from BBC lawyers Messrs Cowardy, Cowardy and Custard	**£500,000**
For adding up the above sums	**£1,000,000**
plus VAT @ 17.5%	
Total	**Shall we say £10 million?**

A WEEK IN PICTURES

HARRY IN CARIBBEAN

BRITAIN LAUNCHES RIVAL TO FRENCH SUPERTRAIN

QUEEN – THE MUSICAL

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0815 hrs Disciplinary proceedings begin in the case of PC Perivale, who is charged with wilfully going on patrol whilst neglecting to complete his paperwork duties. The PC had on 21 March been observed leaving the police station during office hours and proceeding down the street towards the Bluetooth Shopping Mall. When he was stopped by a passing patrol car containing PCs Chalfont and Latimer and asked "What the hell are you doing?", PC Perivale replied, "I am on the beat keeping an eye open for anything suspicious."

PC Perivale was then informed that this was a gross breach of station discipline which could lead to his suspension, unless he was able to prove discrimination on grounds of ethnicity or religion.

Details of the charge against PC Perivale were duly logged on forms AB/4231, PSQ/61, FSB/2007 and PM/29, and submitted to the Disciplinary Management Unit for processing prior to onward referral to the Management Disciplinary Unit.

1300 hrs Full station alert on receipt of a 999 message from a member of staff at the Shirley Williams Primary School in Poundstretcher Lane. It had been reported that a serious hate-crime had been perpetrated by one pupil of the school against another. An armed response unit was despatched to the school, where it was discovered that Child X had sent Child Y a text message reading "Kev u r a gayboy'. Child X was taken into custody after a brief struggle and subjected to interrogation at the station under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

As a result of information extracted from Child X, a second armed response unit was sent to his home address at 412B Spudulike Grove, where his parents were arrested and charged with conspiring to condone a homophobic hate-crime.

When the father of Child X verbally resisted arrest with the offensive remark "I have no idea what you are talking about", he was pacified with a 50,000-volt taser device, which coincided with his premature demise from unrelated causes.

Fortunately the officers involved, PCs Bethnal and Green, were able to claim a month's overtime for the completion of the 24,612 forms that were required in connection with the incident referred to above.

1634 hrs While the station staff were engaged in high-priority police duties, a number of calls had been received on the station answerphones reporting various incidents in the Neasden area, including 14 stabbings, 12 drive-by shootings and a number of alleged acts of rape. Regrettably the messages had to be deleted owing to cutbacks on answerphone tape required under the station's latest budgetary control, rendering further police action unnecessary.

Coming soon to all cinemas

AMUSING GROUSE

The heartwarming story of how one man fought to abolish the evil Conservative Party, which for 200 years had condemned millions of British birds to be shot each year by callous aristocrats and Old Etonians. That man was David Cameron.
(*surely William Wilberhague? Ed*)

Now showing at the following multiplexes

OSBOURNE HIGH STREET
FOX LANE
D'ANCONA VALE
GOVE PARK
UPPER LETWIN
GOLDSMITH GREEN

An Apology To Readers

ON THE cover of the last issue of *Private Eye*, an advertisement appeared promising a free CD of the Yellow Pages read by Stephen Fry inside the magazine. We regret that a number of readers failed to receive their CD. This was due to problems in the distribution chain.

We are pleased to announce that the current issue contains a replacement CD on which Stephen Fry also reads the complete 1901 census for England and Wales.

Scottish readers may apply to our Glasgow distribution centre for a special edition featuring the census results for Scotland read by Sir Sean Connery.

Gilbert and George meet the Chapman Brothers

Those British Press Awards

(continued from page one)

press gazette

Best Free Wallchart

● **The Grauniad**

British Barrel Bottoms (No 94)

Best Free DVD

● **The Daily Telegraph**

"They Flew to Bruges" Disappointing 1973 remake of wartime classic starring Oliver Reed in the Kenneth More role of Squadron Leader "Chalkie" Chalkington. Directed by Michael Winner.

Best Free CD

● **Daily Mail**

"Sprechen Zie Walloon!" Interactive Listen 'n' Learn course. Fluent Flemish in just 6 weeks!

Best Shower Unit Insert

● **The Sunday Times**

Aquafresh Shower Solutions, Runcorn. Glossy A4 "Edvertisement Feature" on the new Power Nozzle 3000 range.

Best Eurostar Offer

● **The Observer**

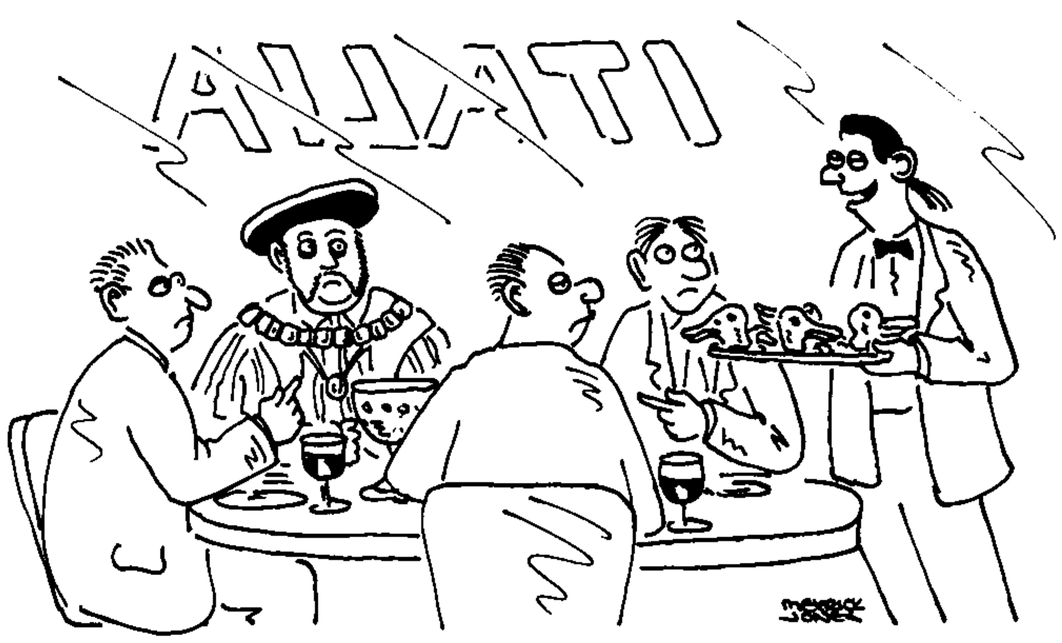
2 for 1 voucher deal choice of Lille or Brussels departing Ashford with booze stop at Calais' celebrated "Monde de Booze" Hypermarche Experience.

Sudoku of the Year

● **Daily Express**

Kamikaze No. 73248. Level: Easy.

(That's enough recognition for top quality journalism in the National Press. Ed)

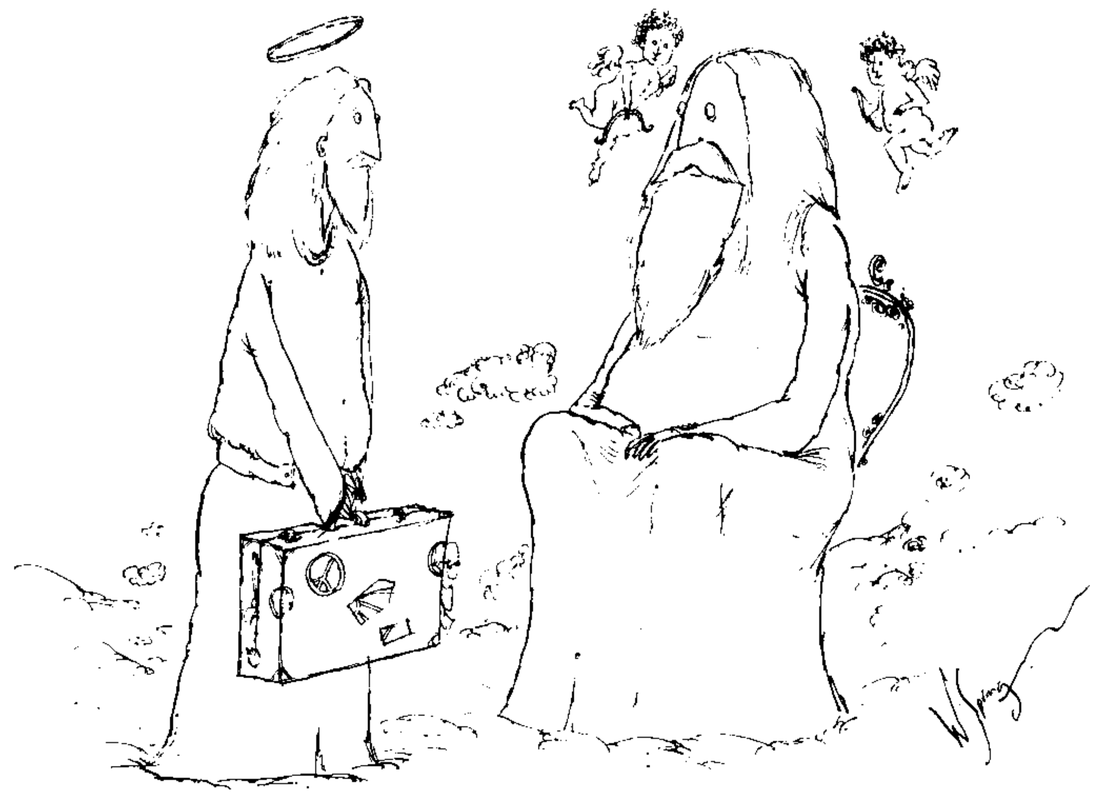


"OK guys, so who's having the swan, peacock and lark's tongue pizza?"

BBC TOO UPMARKET Says BBC Report

Report's other findings:

- Pope too Protestant
- Bears too fussy about using indoor toilets



"Look, I realise they're expecting you, son, but I just don't like you going down there. It's just too rough!"

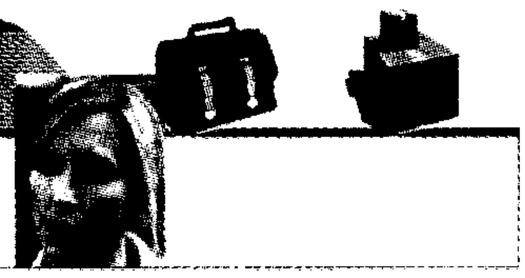
THOSE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN TO OPT FOR HOME BIRTHS

1. CLOSE down their local NHS maternity unit.

2. Er...

3. That's it.

My eBay



luckyheather (32,000,000)

Items I'm Bidding On (1-4 of 4 items)

	Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐ 'How To Win Friends And Influence People' paperback unread	£1.99	£1.50	1
☐ Cheap! Designer bag – fake crocodile, tears on outside, fine inside	£8.99	£2.99	1
☐ Useful Kitchen Gadget – stops butter melting – works every time!	£12.99	£3.00	1
☐ Biography of Yoko Ono, reasonable copy	£3.99	£1.50	1

Items I'm Selling (1-4 of 4 items)

	Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐ 'Rumours' make-up set, by Stella McCartney – achieve that natural 'bare-faced' look – includes various lip glosses, but no foundation	£25.00	£2.50	0
☐ Authentic tiger-skin rug, genuine reason for sale	£5.00	£15.00	0
☐ 'When I'm Sixty-Four' – old Beatle release, single, slightly warped	£0.50	£2.00	0
☐ 'Gold Diggers of 1933' DVD – bought in error	£1.00	£1.00	0

ETHICAL FASHION

How Green Is Your Dressing Gown?

ONCE again Prince Charles leads the way in showing how we can all make a contribution to saving the planet by the way we dress.

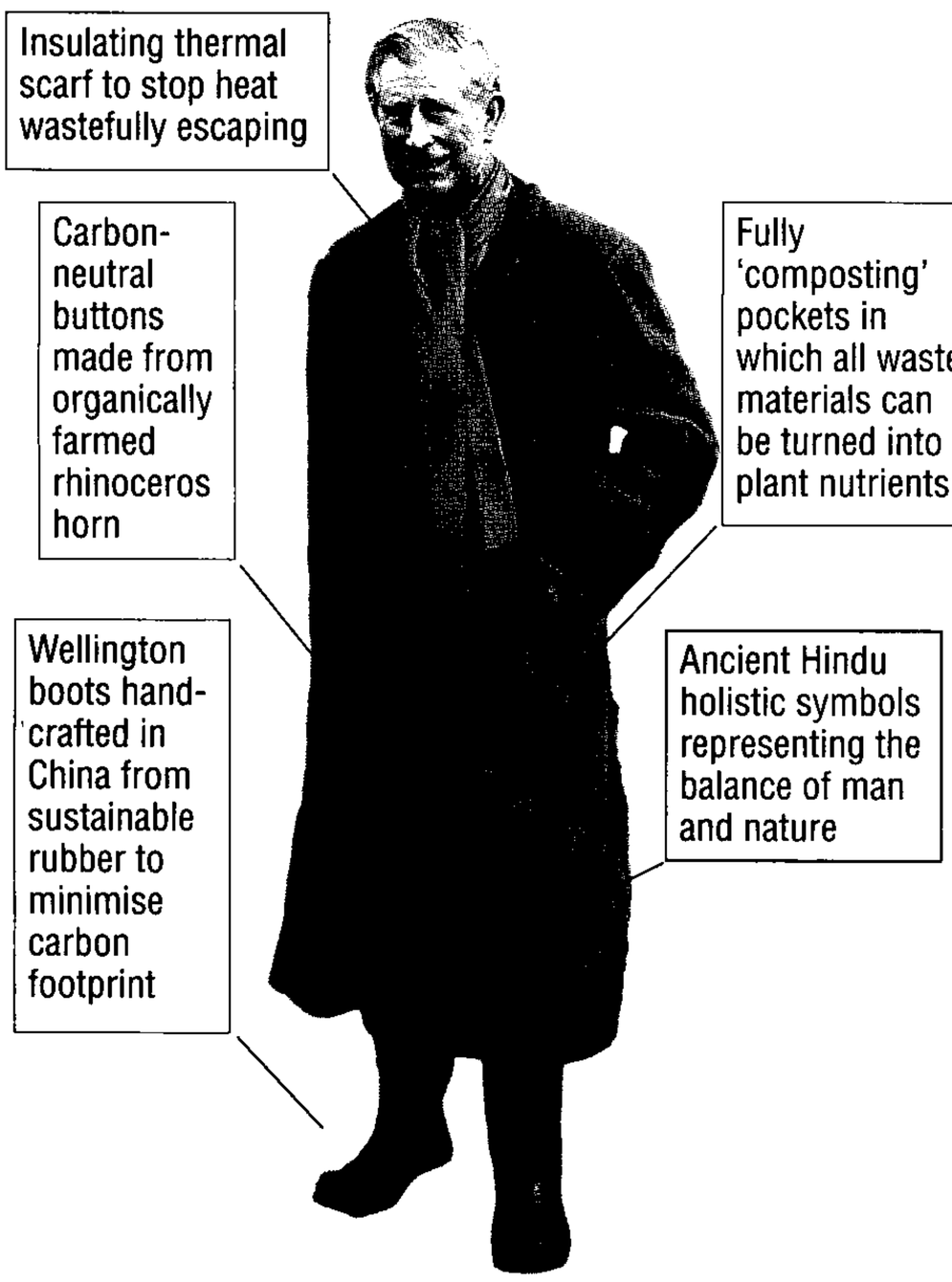
Charles's all-purpose "Green Robe" was yesterday unveiled to the press at a special launch in the grounds of Highgrove.

"This robe," the Prince explained, "is incredibly energy-efficient and can be worn 7/24 at any time of day or night.

"By combining the functions of a dressing gown and an overcoat, it saves over 0.05 tonnes of CO_2 emissions every year.

"In addition, by being made of sustainable wool hand-woven from Afghan goats, it saves 200 acres of rainforest which would otherwise be turned into an environmentally damaging tweed suit of the type worn by my father. What a bastard!"

The Prince is expected to join Twiggy in helping M&S to launch a full range of his new carbon-friendly "overgowns" later this year, retailing at £5,400 each.


Insulating thermal scarf to stop heat wastefully escaping
Carbon-neutral buttons made from organically farmed rhinoceros horn
Wellington boots hand-crafted in China from sustainable rubber to minimise carbon footprint
Fully 'composting' pockets in which all waste materials can be turned into plant nutrients
Ancient Hindu holistic symbols representing the balance of man and nature

WOMAN DOESN'T HAVE FLING WITH CHRIS TARRANT

by Our Media Staff **Milly Onair**

A 45-year-old woman yesterday sensationally claimed that she and Chris Tarrant were not having an affair.

The woman told reporters, "Yes, it's true. TV millionaire Chris Tarrant and I have not slept together and are not even just good friends. He didn't meet me in a wine bar and then didn't install me in a love nest near his home".

The woman's claims were, however, dismissed by Mr Tarrant as "pure fantasy".

But his troubles were made worse when another 45-year-old woman claimed that it was actually she who was not sleeping with the multi-billionaire lothario.

"I thought I was the only woman not in Chris Tarrant's life," she said. "The discovery that there is someone else not sharing

intimate trysts with the TV multi-trillionaire has come as a terrible shock."

The last word, however, went to Ingrid Tarrant, the multi-zillionaire presenter's ex-wife.

"There is only one woman not sleeping with that bastard and it's me."

FICTIONAL CHARACTER FOUND GUILTY OF FICTIONAL MURDER ON TELEVISION

by Our Fictional Crime Staff **Dick Tracy Barlow**

A STORY that really doesn't matter appeared on the front of all newspapers today, as a character in a soap opera was convicted of a crime that didn't actually happen.

The actress who played the character told reporters, "It wasn't me who did it, obviously, because I am an actress and the murder was made up by one of the writers".

On other pages

- Why oh why can't we tell the difference between reality and fiction any more? **2**
- Why do children behave like yobs from the television shows which they read about in the newspapers? **3**
- Some real people get stabbed **94**

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

FEATURING BORIS THE MENACE!

FROM THE GREANO AND DANDY

I SAY, DAVE, SOMEONE'S WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT YOU! HE SAYS YOU WERE BORN WITH A SILVER SPOON IN YOUR MOUTH!
SNOOTY HQ
PHEW! AT LEAST IT WASN'T UP MY NOSE!!!
...THEN YOU GOT TO THE TOP BY GETTING A LEG-UP
WINK
THE DAVE SNOOTY STORY
UNLIKE YOURS TRULY - WHO GOT A LEG-OVER! CHORTLE CHORTLE!
HE'S TALKED TO ALL YOUR CHUMS!
OF COURSE HE HAS. HE WAS AT ETON WITH US!!!
HOORAH!! NOW LET'S DE-BAG OIKY GOVE!!!

WOOLMER – IS HE STILL ALIVE?

Jamaican Police New Theory

by **Phil Tumbler**, Our Man In The Bar With A Rum Punch In One Hand And A Rum Punch In The Other

INSPECTOR KNACKER, formerly 'Knacker of the Yard', now 'Knacker of the Yardies', created a sensation today when he announced at a specially convened press conference that, in his view, former Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer may not after all be dead.

Said the Inspector, "We have to be prepared to look at all possibilities. When you rule out suicide, murder or accidental death, the only theory that holds water is that Mr Woolmer is still *(Contd. p. 94)*

Do you find this joke offensive? Or do you think it makes a valid point? Or don't you care one way or the other? Join the great debate at www.fillthepagessomehow.telegraph.co.uk.

It was the early '90s and the IRA were in that awkward transitional phase...

"I don't know, lads... do we blow up the hotel or add it to our extensive property portfolio?"

COMING SOON

MR BEANO'S HOLIDAY

YOUR favourite funnyman returns when Mr Beano (**Boris Johnson**) goes to Portsmouth and thinks he's in Liverpool. He starts being rude to all the people he meets, imagining that they are drunks, drug addicts and Labour politicians. Whoops!

It's a *tour de farce* as Mr Beano comes a cropper – yet again!!

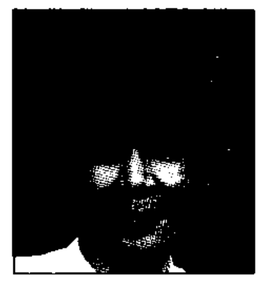
EYE RATING

For children of 8 or under only

Cast in full

Rowan Atkinson	Jacques Tati
Mr Hulot	Mr Beano
Boris Johnson	Himself

SAVE OUR MOIRA Pope Backs Eye Campaign



HUNDREDS of major world leaders have joined Private Eye's crusade to stop the evil bosses of the BBC sacking Britain's best-loved newsreader.

Yesterday, His Holiness Pope Benedict XCIV accounced from the Vatican that Moira Stuart is to be fast-tracked for canonisation, to indicate his disapproval of the action by BBC management, which has sent shock waves round the globe.

Further backing for the campaign came from Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, President Putin and Sir Rory Bremner, the TV satirist and political commentator, who all signed a letter from Private Eye to the Chairman of the BBC, describing Ms Stuart as "a national treasure".

At an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council in New York, China, Brazil and Latvia put forward a resolution condemning the BBC's action as "regrettable" and contrary to Article 94 of the Geneva Convention on the rights of TV newsreaders to maintain their Sunday morning slot on the "Frosties With Marr" show.

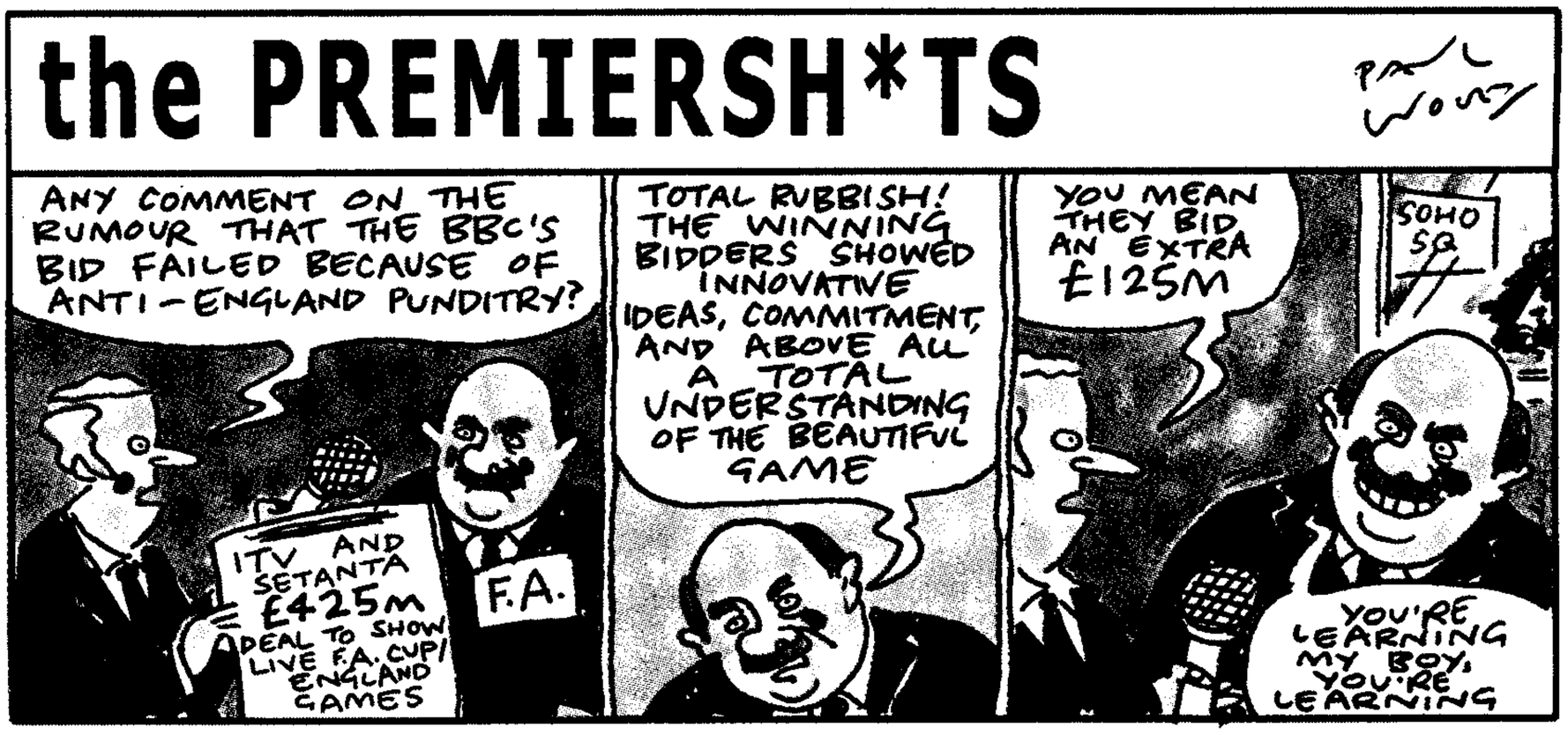
You too can add your voice to those of Sir Harold Pinter, Sir Jonathan Miller, Salman Rushdie and TV historian Andrew Roberts by texting your protest to 'Save Our Moira' on 83452.

BOOK REVIEW

The Dangerous Book for Modern Boys

Building your own virtual treehouse

- Switch on the computer.
- Spend day downloading '*Virtual Treehouse Construction*' programme.
- Switch computer off.


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLEY
ANY COMMENT ON THE RUMOUR THAT THE BBC'S BID FAILED BECAUSE OF ANTI-ENGLAND PUNDITRY?
ITV AND SETANTA £425M DEAL TO SHOW LIVE F.A. CUP/ ENGLAND GAMES
F.A.
TOTAL RUBBISH! THE WINNING BIDDERS SHOWED INNOVATIVE IDEAS, COMMITMENT, AND ABOVE ALL A TOTAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME
YOU MEAN THEY BID AN EXTRA £125M
SOHO SQ
YOU'RE LEARNING MY BOY, YOU'RE LEARNING

DAILY TEHRANOGRAPH
First with the nukes!
FRIDAY, 13 APRIL 2007

London Gave Off Confusing Signals During Hostage Crisis

BY OUR MAN IN THE UK **AYATOLLAH GRAF**

WHO'S in charge? That was the difficulty Iranian diplomats faced as they sought someone in London with whom they could negotiate over the hostage crisis.

"Theoretically," said one source, "the man at the top of the government is the elected leader Tony Blair.

"But he no longer exercises any real power as various competing groups jockey for position within the British regime."

Nominal leader

"On the one hand," said our source, "you have the old guard led by the ageing, ultra-orthodox Brown and his loyal henchman Straw.

"On the other, you have the youthful, more moderate wing known as the "Milibands", who favour rapprochement with everybody."

What makes the situation more difficult to interpret is the increasing influence of the fanatical "Redtops" – gangs of lawless and disaffected journalists who roam the streets shouting "Hands off our Faye!" and "Nuke Iran now!"

Also, one must not discount the role in the crisis played by Britain's most senior cleric, Archbishop Rowan Atkinson, a remote bearded figure to whom none of the leaders in the country look for guidance *(cont. p. 94)*

ON OTHER PAGES ● Your beards tonight **2** ● Fashion: Is Black the new Black? **3** ● Weather: Not at all Sunni **94**

25 YEARS ON

CROWDS CHEER AS TASK FORCE SAILS FOR GULF

by Our Man On The Dockside **R.G. Bargee**

BANDS played and flags fluttered bravely in the breeze, as the entire Royal Navy today set sail from Portsmouth to liberate the victims of Iranian aggression.

The so-called 'task force' despatched by prime minister 'Maggie' Blair consists of one rubber dinghy, HMS Useless, two canoes, HMS Ant and HMS Dec, and a rowing boat crewed by round-the-world yachtswomen Ellen McArthur.

Gotcha!

If weather conditions are favourable, the task force should arrive in the disputed waters of the Shat-al-over-Britz sometime early next year.

STOP PRESS

● Task force recalled as hostages freed.

ON OTHER PAGES

● Humiliated, mocked and made to look a complete idiot – is this a suitable job for a woman?

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

An Apology

IN PAST decades, we may have claimed that all civil servants were old fashioned bureaucrats in the mould of Sir Humphrey Appleby, whose sole purpose was to obstruct the programme of the democratically elected Conservative government, and that these civil servants deserved nothing but scorn and derision and that their so called advice should always be taken with a large dose of salt.

We now realise, in the light of the revelations that there is currently a Labour government, that nothing could be further from the truth. These hard working servants of the nation are in fact paragons of virtue, whose sage advice should always be taken by ministers, and if those ministers ignore their advice they should deserve scorn and derision.

We apologise for any confusion caused, and any confusion in the future when a civil servant disagrees with a policy of a future Conservative chancellor, and we condemn them as being unworthy of... etc... etc... etc...

Late Iran News

GEORGE BUSH has launched a savage attack on Iran after it captured fifteen British sailors and marines.

"The Iranians really should have put their prisoners in manacles and orange jumpsuits and started torturing them," insisted the President.

"Instead, they let them go. This shows a complete disregard for the Geneva Convention as re-written by me."

"007 – I'd like you to meet 00"

DIARY

ANDREW ROBERTS

Off to the States for a fortnight's book tour, to promote my new classic, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since Whenever*! It's a sequel to Winston's plucky little stab at the same topic!

In New York, my arrival causes the traffic to grind to a halt! Americans absolutely love the Brits, yours truly in particular! To save them having to ask, I give them a taste of my marvellous English accent at every opportunity – and needless to say they lap it up!

"I say, old bean!" I remark to the driver of my Hansom Cab (yellow, if you please – that's the cab, not the driver! – though come to think of it he might have had a touch of the Chinky Chinaman about him!!!), "Isn't this simply spiffing weather we're having, old bean?!"

Hole in one! In deference, the fellow brings his vehicle to a halt and opens my door, kindly advising me that I can walk from here.

"Jolly good show!" I say. He seems to love this encouragement from such a luminary from "across the water", flashing me Winston's redoubtable V for Victory sign before whizzing off!

On further inquiry, I find that the hotel's actually a couple of miles away, in New York's fashionable Upper Back Side, but it's only sleeting very slightly, and my suitcases aren't all that heavy, so best foot forward, Roberts!

That night, Henry and Nancy Kissinger throw a dinner party at their apartment, so I have a chance to meet La Creme de la Creme of New York society. Rupert Murdoch turns out to have precisely the opposite of the personality caricatured in the Stalinist-liberal media.

We cross swords in the most amicable manner. "I had no idea you were quite so charming, witty, and good-natured!" I say to him. "Must be going," he replies back, quick as a flash. What a jolly busy place New York is! Almost all the New Yorkers I am introduced to seem to have urgent appointments elsewhere!

It later transpires that Rupert's appointment was on the other side of the room, talking to someone else. This was a tremendous stroke of luck, because it meant I could go up to him and generously offer him another chance to pick my proverbial brains!

New York is full of "sky-scrapers", which are vast great buildings.

"How the giddy heck did they get a name like that?" I ask a leading American historian, who was greatly enjoying my new book.

It turns out that sky-scrapers are so-called because they seem to "scrape" the "sky", if you please!

I ask Henry Kissinger, who is enjoying my new book, why they made them quite so tall. He informs me it is so that they could fit more people in. So there you have it from the horse's mouth!

I suppose that the "sky-scraper" is what they call a sign of the times! Incidentally, Mayor Bloomberg tells me that they refer to New York affectionately as "The Big Apple". I pass on this valuable nugget of local colour at no extra charge! It's the sort of telling detail one only discovers by talking to the movers and shakers in any given city! Mayor Bloomberg is enjoying my new book, by the way!

The next night, leading New York socialite Alka Seltzer, heir to the great indigestion fortune, throws a party for me at the influential Metropolitan Club. After a sumptuous repast – contrary to expectation, American food isn't all just hamburgers and chips! – my fellow diners are invited to ask me questions about my new book, which they are all enjoying. The questions are all highly intelligent, as one might expect of that estimable country's top Republican thinkers!

"As a leading historian, how many pages would you estimate your new book is, in total?" asks H. Opal Fruit Jr, the confectionery heir.

"Five hundred and sixty pages, including the index" I reply, after a quick glance at my notes!

"Gee! That's some book!" replies Opal. I'm delighted to say the other top thinkers in the room responded to his triumphant assertion with a round of applause! They never knew books could be so long!

Tomorrow Hiram Felt-Tip III, heir to the pen dynasty, is throwing an intimate dinner for 500 in my honour. He lives in California, which I am reliably informed is home to Hollywood, where they make the moving pictures!

Fly to Washington, where everyone is thoroughly enjoying my new book. Most people imagine that New York is the capital of America – not so, apparently! Whoops! It turns out to be Washington, of all places! Memo to self: make correction to Washington entry for long-awaited second edition of new book, which everyone is enjoying!

The next morning, I deliver a lecture to White House officials – most of whom turn out to be American, judging by their accents!

"Historically, the White House is where the President of the United States of America traditionally lives" I inform a hushed room. As a top historian, I assure them that the War on Terror is really just like the 2nd World War, and that once Adolf Hitler (or in this case Saddam Hussein) is got rid of, peace will follow in a matter of days!

They are so delighted by this historic overview that they invited me to spend some time in the Oval Office. When the door opens and we are ushered in, the President calls out in mock surprise "And you are?!" Quick as a flash, I adopt the same surprised tone and say, "No need to tell me who you are!" This puts him at his ease.

After a few minutes with me, his resilience and fortitude is renewed. I give him a few clues about how to win the war on terror, sketching a map of the world on the back of an envelope, with X's showing the best places to bomb tomorrow morning.

The Stalinist liberal-left may try to make out he's stupid, but apparently not: he listens terribly carefully to what I have to say.

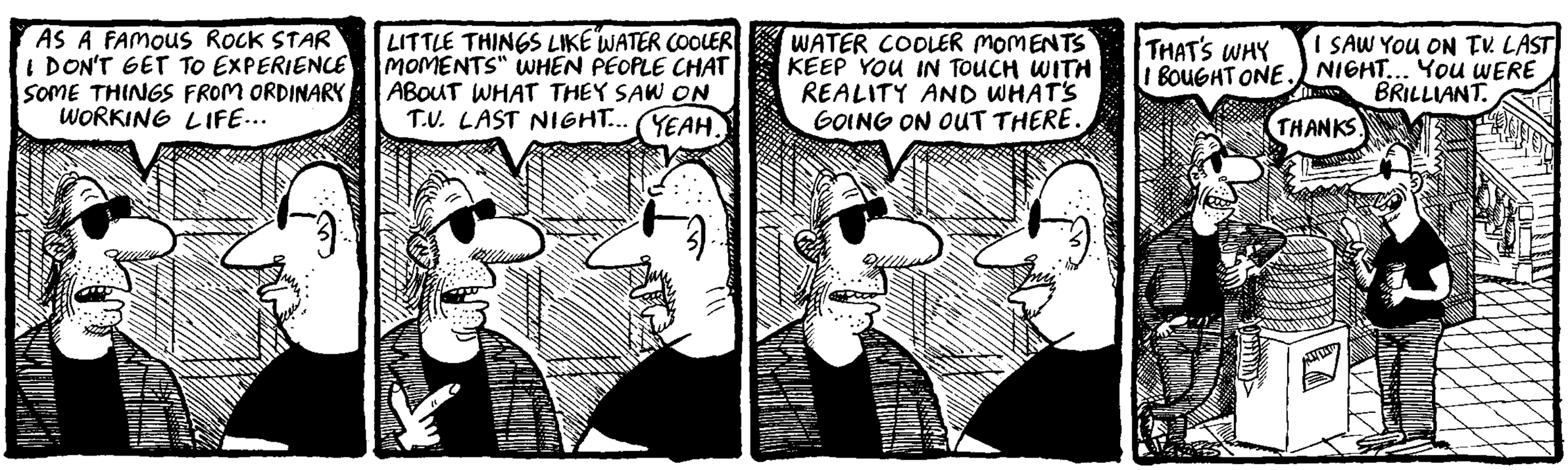
After lunch with the charming Karl Rove and the effortlessly witty Dick Cheney, who are both loving my new book, I take my leave. "It's been a great pleasure for us all to have had a historian of your stature here with us in the States, Mr Schama," says the President.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


AS A FAMOUS ROCK STAR I DON'T GET TO EXPERIENCE SOME THINGS FROM ORDINARY WORKING LIFE...
LITTLE THINGS LIKE "WATER COOLER MOMENTS" WHEN PEOPLE CHAT ABOUT WHAT THEY SAW ON T.V. LAST NIGHT...
YEAH.
WATER COOLER MOMENTS KEEP YOU IN TOUCH WITH REALITY AND WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE.
THAT'S WHY I BOUGHT ONE.
I SAW YOU ON T.V. LAST NIGHT... YOU WERE BRILLIANT.
THANKS.

Literary Review

Shingle-track mind

On Chesil Beach
By Ian McEwan
(Cape £12.99)

ODD CHAP, Ian McEwan, and with a critical reputation to match. To the substantial part of the book-buying public that takes its opinions from the liberal broadsheets – see especially the *Guardian*, where his merits are endlessly talked up – he figures as a kind of molten god, the concerned conscience of the modern novel in a tradition that goes back to Angus Wilson. His fellow writers, on the other hand, can't quite see what all the fuss is about and wonder why highly placed chums such Craig Raine go all ballistic in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* on the rare occasions that their man gets a bad review. Me, I think he's a perfectly competent upper-brow novelist with a pronounced creepy side that the kind people at Cape ought to encourage him to rein in every now and then.

Anyway, the creepy side is much in evidence in the bulked out novella (166 meagre pages in large type) that is *On Chesil Beach*. We are introduced to its protagonists, Edward and Florence, on their wedding night in 1962. She is a classical violinist, he a recent Oxford graduate who has surrendered the promise of a First in History for a job with her father's scientific instrument firm. Sexual intercourse, you will recall, began in 1963 and this has been a chaste courtship. As the dinner in the Dorset hotel unwinds, Florence's anxieties reach fever pitch. In particular, the thought of her husband's testicles, "pendulous beneath his *engorged* penis", has the power "to make her upper lip curl… Sex with Edward could not be the summation of her joy, but the price she must pay for it."

There follows a thirty-page account of Edward trying and failing to have his wicked way, all done with the lemur-eyed attention to physical detail and psychological hurt that McEwan fans know so well ("But now she was incapable of repressing her primal disgust, the visceral horror" etc). Though no thought could have been further from McEwan's mind, it is horribly funny – not because there is anything humorous in the problems of a young couple made miserable by a psychological hang-up, but because of the almost forensic prurience brought to the exposure of their dilemma, as if Russ Meyer had sat down to try his hand at writing a medical textbook.

In the end Florence dashes out on to the beach, is confronted by her outraged swain, stalks off in torment and never speaks to him again. There follows a brief coda – by far the best thing in the book – describing the drifting and rather desultory life that Edward goes on to live without her, and a last-page injunction that a bit less selfishness might have saved the day: "He did not know, or would not have cared to know, that as she ran away from him, certain in her distress that she was about to lose him, she had never loved him more, or more hopelessly, and that the sound of his voice would have been a deliverance, and she would have turned back."

Would she indeed? Like every one of McEwan's previous novels, this is a) faintly implausible, and b) unable to disguise the punctiliousness of its research. *Saturday*, the last one, was full of the interesting stuff that McEwan had dredged up from back numbers of the *Brain Surgeon's Gazette* and *Blues Guitarist*. This one – see in particular the discussion of early Sixties politics that occupies pages 24-5 – betrays some inspired browsing in recent social history textbooks. All this, though, is incidental to the book's inner core: that pair of pale authorial eyes looming ominously out of the darkness, just itching to get to grips with a description of an exposed cranium, a human liver or recently discharged seminal fluid. Here once again, cross-legged on his rock, goblin bones softly crunching between his teeth, subterranean lake receding beneath his scaly toes, sits the Gollum of English fiction.

Fragrant marketing

Sisters
HRH
By Danielle Steel
(Both Bantam, £17.99)

A GOOD reviewer should be able to sniff out a bad book. But until now, one hasn't also had to use a more literal sense of smell.

All that has changed with the latest product to roll off the unstoppable Danielle Steel production line. *Sisters* may look like a novel but on closer inspection this book-shaped object is merely the packaging for a promotional sample of the new celebrity fragrance entitled "*Danielle* by Danielle Steel". It comes in the form of a scratch-n-sniff card – sorry, a single use peel-off towelette – attached to a bookmark inserted within, and (if it hasn't been filched) in a miniature spray dispenser taped across the top of the book's wrapper.

Sniff, snort, wrinkle nose, ponder: I'm getting a steely aroma of mechanical banality here, with top notes of cloying sweetness and cliché, a whiff of staleness too, perhaps, but no scents of humour.

Let's take characterisation, for example. Candy, one of the four sisters of the title, is described on the same page as being "the most successful supermodel in America" and "the hottest model in the business" and "one of the world's leading models" and "an incredible beauty" and "virtually perfect for the camera", with "no flaws, no defects". Presumably this is the "flawless characterisation" which makes this author's characters so human, so real and so entirely, er, "unforgettable".

The other three sisters are described with similar, if less enthusiastic, subtlety. Annie is a gifted artist who has settled in Italy where she gains "deep satisfaction" from being "deeply engrossed" in working with people who share her "deep commitment" to art, for which she is "deeply grateful". The "stunning looking" Tammy is the "archetypal female television executive", while the eldest, Sabrina, is a "family attorney in one of the busiest practices in New York". They all converge on their parents' home for a family reunion to mark the July Fourth holiday. And that's when tragedy strikes. Spoiler warning: don't look now. Mom dies horribly in a car crash and Annie loses her sight and the rest of the book is devoted to the four sisters' attempts to move on from this double calamity. They divide up their mother's jewels, disapprove of their father's choice of step-mom, and discuss each other's dates. It all ends happily with a marriage or two, in time for the last page to be devoted to a full-page ad for, you guessed it, the new fragrance *Danielle*.

Steel's previous novel, *HRH*, only came out a few weeks before *Sisters*. But although it may have been supplanted in the bestseller bins by the perfume package, *HRH* has been given a boost of topicality by recent events in Harrods and the High Court.

It's all about a princess, you see, whose name includes the letters "i", "a", "n" and "a", who was once followed around by some old "royal dog" called Charles, and who is caught by the paparazzi leaving the Paris Ritz with her new boyfriend, of whom her royal family disapproves, and has to speed off in a limousine. Later there's a ghastly car crash which provokes a constitutional crisis.

But it all ends happily because, you see, it's not about Diana at all. It's about a fictitious princess called Christianna, who's the daughter of the crown prince of Liechtenstein. (Not the real principality squeezed between Switzerland and Austria and famous chiefly for its postage stamps, but an alternative version more like, say, Monaco.)

Poor Christianna is champing at

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
YOU MUST LET ME IN! DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST- NOW BUGGER OFF!
PIERS MORGAN BOOK LAUNCH
DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
YAWN

the bit because it's her royal duty to spend her life cutting ribbons for new hospitals and waiting to marry a suitable prince (that Charles really is her dog, a shaggy Great Pyrenean). And a commoner just won't do. Yet it's a commoner she wants to marry, a dashing American doctor from "Doctors Without Borders" whom she meets while on a gap-year stint of mercy tourism (sorry, passionately devoted volunteer work) at an Aids clinic in Eritrea (which Steel appears to think is to the south of Ethiopia).

It's all rather unbelievable. The princess travels with two bodyguards and uses her own royal passport yet imagines no one will recognise her. Only when one of her fellow Red Cross volunteers happens to read a copy of *Majesty* magazine is Christianna's cover blown. Even in Paris, for a secret rendezvous with her doctor boyfriend (this doctor and nurse stuff is very Mills and Boon) she seems surprised to have been ambushed by the paparazzi. (Like, hello?)

Luckily it's not she who's lost in the mangled wreckage of the speeding car but her father and brother, clearing her way to both the throne and marriage to her commoner. A happy ending of sorts, then, and not a phoney pharaoh in sight.

Look out for the scratch-n-sniff cards in the paperback edition.

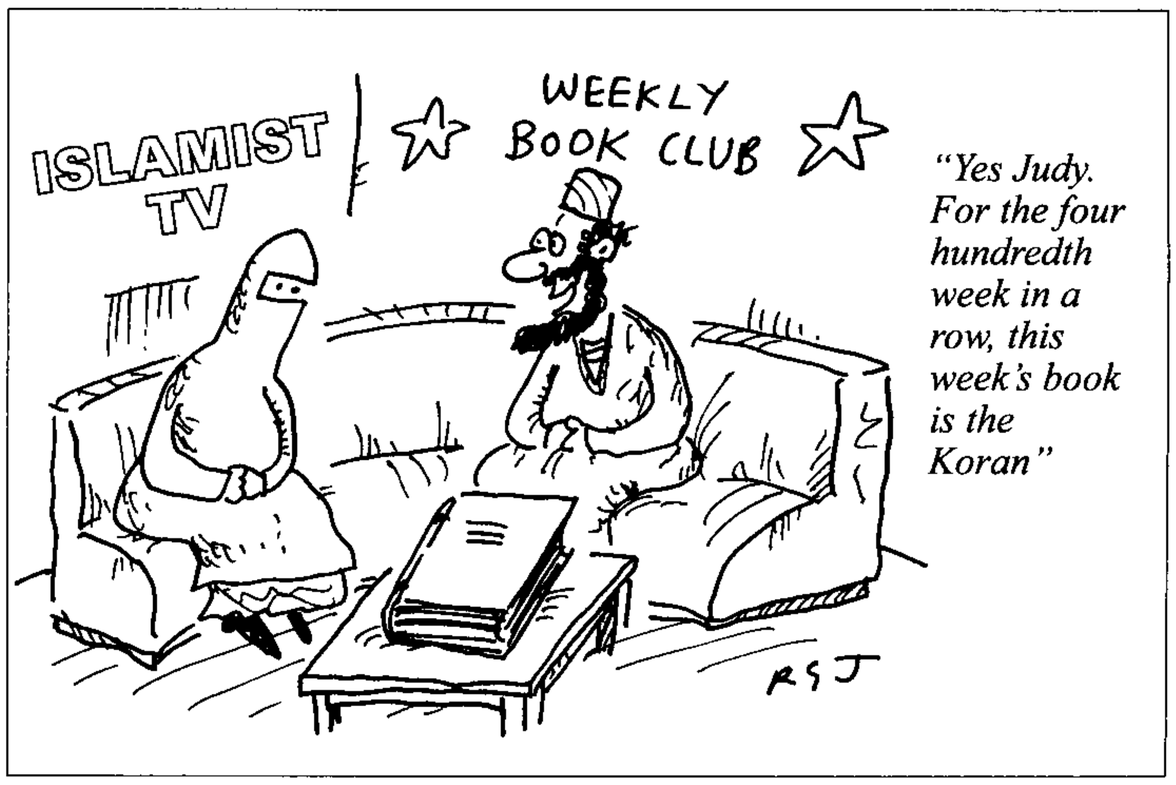
Books & Bookmen

■ THE *Guardian*'s "reader evenings" are meant to be convivial events, allowing fans to fete favourite authors as in James Naughtie's Radio 4 *Book Club*. The atmosphere at the recent evening with Graham Swift was considerably chillier, however.

Irked by a long introduction from his interviewer, the English professor and *Newsnight Review* pundit John Mullan ("I was waiting for a question" was the novelist's mood-setting first contribution), Swift remained ratty throughout, treating Mullan's questions with a mixture of irony and open scorn ("so what is your point?") – and turning the event into a Pinter-esque verbal duel that was far more riveting, irreverent audience members noted, than the novel they were discussing.

■ THOUGH often accused by other publishers of favouritism towards the publishers with which he has links, *Observer* literary editor Robert McCrum remains incorrigible. On April 1 he was taking the piss. Of nine full-length reviews in the books section six were either for Faber (where he was editorial director) or imprints of Penguin (which published his PG Wodehouse biog), and four of these were page leads!

■ IN A tie-up with Transworld, the new, flagrantly mistitled Daily Mail Novel of the Year Prize offers previously unpublished novelists a publishing deal worth £30,000, and no doubt oodles of free publicity in the paper. The Mail and Transworld clearly want a bit of the "Richard and Judy" action and given the success of some recent first-time novelists, this looks a canny gamble. But will wannabes be satisfied by the relatively paltry size of the advance on offer? And/or association with the nation's favourite right-wing rag?



"Yes Judy. For the four hundredth week in a row, this week's book is the Koran"

LUVVIES

I love travelling...

Alone – especially on a plane because you're faced with your own mortality. I always tend to cry on planes too – in a good way. I just find it a very centring experience. You're leaving something behind and you're filled with the poetry of a journey. When I get to my destination, though, I want company.

RHYS IFANS
Observer
Submitted by Edmund Smith.

Private Eye's Worstseller Chart

Position	Author	Title	Publisher	Reported advance	Sales to date	Cost of advance per book	Copies needed to sell to make back advance
1	Patrick McCabe	*Winterwood*	Bloomsbury	£62,500	1,874	£33.35	40,095
2	John Cornwell	*Seminary Boy*	Fourth Estate	£100,000	2,337	£42.79	52,115
3	Hisham Matar	*In The Country Of Men*	Penguin	£250,000	17,382	£14.38	265,641
4	Shayne Ward	*My Story*	Orion	£200,000	22,998	£8.70	111,185
5	Pete Bennett	*Pete: My Story*	HarperCollins	£1,000,000	38,057	£26.28	760,730

Pseuds Corner

The work of the novelist is to enliven time, as it is to animate space... I think most readers – surely, virtually all readers – will be surprised to learn that structured storytelling, from the most basic beginning-middle-end scheme of traditional tales to more elaborately constructed nonchronological and multi-voiced narratives, is actually a form of oppression rather than a source of delight.

The late SUSAN SONTAG,
Guardian

I have a Book of Common Prayer by each telephone so that I may read as I, mostly, turn away whoever it is...

CANDIA MCWILLIAM,
'Best Things', The Author

Well aware of the lateness of the hour, the brightness of the day and the fullness of time, because ultimately there's no hurry and a void to fill, the surefooted Ferry heads out into the black, colossal brevity of the fourth track from John Wesley Harding *(All Along the Watchtower)*. With just the correct amount of transcendent grace he sings the song, which is just a song and much more than a song, as if to say, wherever I've been, whoever I've been, whoever I met, and it might have been me, it might have been you, whatever I've seen, whatever happens next, because it means a lot to me... It's been an absolute pleasure.

PAUL MORLEY,
Liner notes to the new Bryan Ferry CD

Acustica led the way in a series of soundscape pieces especially designed for radio (in German "Horspiel"), and Kagel's imagination has often led him far beyond the natural habitat of the composer. Film is still an important preoccupation and his 1970 film *Ludwig van* has Beethoven himself travelling to Bonn to observer his own bicentennial celebrations... Other works are designed for acrobats (*Variete*) and gymnasts (*Ex-Positionen*). *A Breeze* is written for 111 cyclists who whistle, sing and ring their bells as they ride in formation.

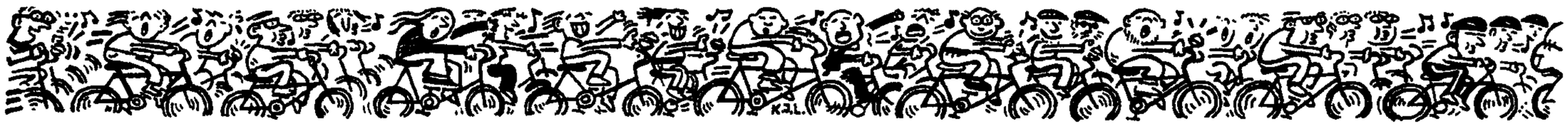
Interview with composer MAURICIO KAGEL, *The Gramophone*

This paper is concerned with a conundrum; that efforts towards ensuring women's inclusion as full subjects of international law seem to have had the opposite effect of discursively reproducing their marginalization by repeating the gendered dichotomies and hierarchies that have long sustained women as 'other' to the universal.

Abstract of a lecture given by PROFESSOR DIANNE OTTO entitled 'The Exile of Inclusion: Rethinking Feminist Challenges to the Gendered Languages and Economies of International Human Rights Law' at the University of the West of England.

CONTRIBUTORS: C. Barron, Anonymous, 'Jack Frost', Dr David Creasey, James Dixon.

£10 paid for all entries



IN THE BACK

LEGAL AID

Conscience Baird

THIS MONTH's legal aid "reforms" will not only leave many, including some of the poorest and most vulnerable, without representation in court, they will also massively increase the likelihood of major miscarriages of justice.

Already some of the better criminal justice law firms are struggling to keep their heads above water. Some are abandoning legal aid work and others are being forced to employ unqualified staff. With a flat fee, no matter what the case, it is inevitable that the tricky and the time-consuming are the most likely to suffer.

As regular *Eye* readers will be aware, many innocent people have been rotting away in jail because material which pointed to their innocence lay buried in dusty boxes of evidence. It was either never disclosed, deliberately concealed, or overlooked, and only came out because of painstaking detective work by dedicated solicitors such as Gareth Peirce (Guildford Four), Jim Nichol (Carl Bridgewater case) and Campbell Malone (Stefan Kiszko), to name but a few.

What grates with such hard-working lawyers is that the minister driving through these latest cuts is none other than Vera Baird QC (pictured), who not so long ago used to make a living from legal aid work in the chambers of top criminal barrister Michael Mansfield QC. So much money, in fact, that it became the subject of a Law Lords inquiry.

Ms Baird was one of several "fat cat lawyers" who had their legal aid bills slashed. As junior counsel to Michael Mansfield QC in a three-day murder appeal, her £22,537.50 bill was cut to £7,850. (Mansfield's was also reduced from £22,300 to £12,300).

And it was only 18 months ago that Ms Baird, as MP for Redcar, was attacking the government over planned legal aid reforms. She was the first to point out that the legal aid bill was inevitably rising because the government had created a staggering 700 new criminal offences.

In a Commons debate in October 2005, no one could have put the case for criminal legal aid better. Some people are not guilty because they are mentally ill; some are charged incorrectly; some are not guilty because the science evidence is wrong – take Sally Clarke, she said: "Let us talk plainly, some people are also fitted up by the police. It is imperative to understand that a lot of people are brought to trial who are not guilty and who are in dire distress because they have been falsely accused. They must be represented properly."

But then she won't be the first government critic to have been silenced by promotion.

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

Third time lucky?

WHEN detective inspector Chris Spackman was jailed in 2003 for a "disgusting catalogue of crime and lies", the case of Kevin Lane (pictured), jailed for murder, was among 22 involving the bent copper that were scrutinised by the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

It was the second time lawyers had submitted a dossier to the justice watchdogs on behalf of Lane, who has always protested his innocence in the 1994 murder of Robert Magill. The businessman was shot at close range in the head while walking his dog in Hertfordshire in 1994. It was described as a professional hit. Witnesses saw two killers.

The first application to the CCRC went nowhere: Lane said the investigating officer had fabricated evidence and withheld material that might have pointed to the real perpetrators. But Lane's lawyers didn't expect much. A former middleweight boxer known as "lights out", Lane grew up among criminals and had served 14 months for violence. The officer, Spackman, at that time had an exemplary record.

Lane thought his claims might be taken more seriously when Spackman was jailed at the Old Bailey for conspiring with others to steal £160,000 from Hertfordshire police. The prosecutor at Spackman's trial said that "the lengths he went to, the lies he told and the documents that were forged would have been worthy of a seasoned fraudster".

But again, the CCRC refused to order a full inquiry. Not only that, but after Lane's conviction, the police had told the tabloids that he was a hired gun who was responsible for several killings, including Charlie Wilson, the great train robber, in Spain in 1990, and Karen Reed in 1994 – murders with which he was never charged and to which no evidence linked him. When newscaster Jill Dando was shot, it was even reported that he had been questioned by police. Not so.

The evidence against Lane in the killing of Magill was always thin. He was convicted by a majority verdict at a retrial, after the original jury could not reach a verdict. He was not picked out by the two witnesses on an identity parade. His children's hand-prints and one of his fingerprints were found in the murder get-away car – but he had admitted borrowing the car and had returned it three days before it was stolen and used by the killers.

In the days after Magill's death, police received tip-offs naming two men who were also linked to the car: David Smith and Roger Vincent. They provided alibis for each other and Smith never stood trial. Vincent stood trial briefly alongside Lane, but was acquitted on the direction of the judge.

Lane maintained that Spackman did a deal with Vincent to exonerate him while incriminating Lane. Spackman is said to have told Vincent's mother ahead of the trial that her son would come home but Lane would go down. He had also visited Vincent on remand without making proper records.

Then, in what was said to be a criminal underworld revenge killing, David King was gunned down in 2003 as he left his gym in Hoddeson, Herts. In February this year, two men lost their appeal against conviction for the hit: David Smith and Roger Vincent.

Lane's lawyer, Maslen Merchant, is about to submit a third dossier to the CCRC outlining the many similarities between the killings. And he is seeking access to police documents relating to both Smith and Vincent. "Lane may have been many things in his criminal past, but he was not a hitman," Merchant said. "This is a grave miscarriage of justice involving a corrupt police officer and very flimsy evidence. Sooner or later the CCRC will have to give weight to the numerous developments in the case that have taken place since trial."

DEFENCE

Gone for a Halliburton

HALLIBURTON's decision to move its headquarters to Dubai caused rage in the US but drew little comment in Britain outside the financial pages.

American anger is not hard to understand: the firm was thrown millions in "no-bid" contracts for the Iraq war, and responded by patriotically upping sticks and putting its HQ in the tax-free UAE. The fact that the UAE – which is also free of votes and political parties – is a major export route to Iran also caused a little embarrassment in the US.

Thanks to Labour's enthusiasm for the Bush-favoured firm, Halliburton is also well integrated into the UK military. It helps run Britain's nuclear deterrent by owning (with firms such as the Weir Group) the Devonport nuclear dockyard. It transports British tanks across the battlefield thanks to the PFI "heavy equipment transporter" scheme, which is busy supplying tank transporters and drivers in Iraq. It is leading the construction of the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers, effectively supervising British firms such as BAE, and is building barracks across Salisbury Plain as the leaders of the Aspire Defence consortium. Halliburton also has a contract as "logistical support partner" of the "permanent joint headquarters", the Northwood military super-HQ, although this grand-sounding job is mostly about supplying the top brass with post-it notes and paperclips. It also has an expensive but unglamorous job flushing all the army's lavatories and running British military plumbing through Project Aquatrine, a 25-year PFI.

With the company's latest move, everything from Britain's Trident missiles to soldiers' toilets are now being run by a firm in the Middle East.

Happy everyone?

LAND SALES

The curse of Gnome

LAND sales scammer Andrew Smith has had a run of bad luck since threatening to sue the *Eye* for "liable" *(sic)* last year.

In 2005 we revealed how Guildford-based Smith and his partner Godfrey Chapples were selling "self-build" plots for £5,000 each to gullible punters who hoped it was a cheap way of getting on to the housing ladder, or making a fast buck (*Eye* 1139).

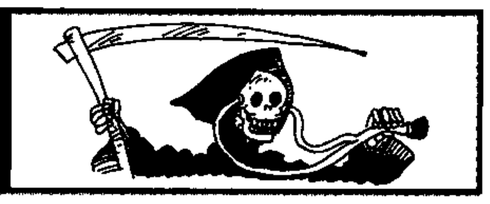
The catch was that the plots for sale on his UK International Land Sales and Development (ILS) and United Plotowners Associates (UPA) websites did not have planning permission and were unlikely ever to get it, being on greenbelt land and in some cases on flood plains or in protected woodland. After we reported in August 2006 that Smith and his companies had left their offices without telling hundreds of plot owners (*Eye* 1164), Smith wrote threatening to sue, but nothing further was heard.

ILS then went into liquidation and its website vanished. A message on UPA's website claimed the firm was moving to Pall Mall, London, but no such move ever took place. UPA has now gone into a Company Voluntary Arrangement, which allows it to freeze its creditors at a point in time and continue to trade. Creditors are unlikely to see a full return of their money under a CVA, which typically lasts between three and five years.

Another of Smith's ventures – a company running the Victoria pub in Woodham, Surrey – has also gone into liquidation. Annual returns for his Lenwood Country Club at Bideford, Devon, are seven months overdue, so the company could be fined and, in the long term, wound up. On 27 April, Smith faces a petition for bankruptcy filed by his brother and his cousin at Barnstaple County Court.

Meanwhile Smith's fellow UPS director, Godfrey Chapples, has struck out on his own and set up a new company called AMP Strategic Land Ltd. *Caveat emptor!*

HEALTH CHECK



NHS LONDON

Insider jobs

NO SURPRISES that just as the capital's Strategic Health Authority is about to publish a controversial London-wide "review", it should appoint a new team committed to privatisation and market-style reforms.

With little public accountability, but responsible for the health of seven million people, "NHS London" is the biggest of the 10 mega-quangos created by last year's health reforms. It is under the control of a unique mix of high profile figures linked both to Gordon Brown and his cherished market reforms.

In the chair of NHS London is **George Greener**, veteran of Mars and British American Tobacco and until recently a director of Reckitt Benckiser plc, which owns the over-the-counter pharmaceuticals operation of Boots. His side-kick as finance director is ex-Unilever finance chief **Paul Baumann**.

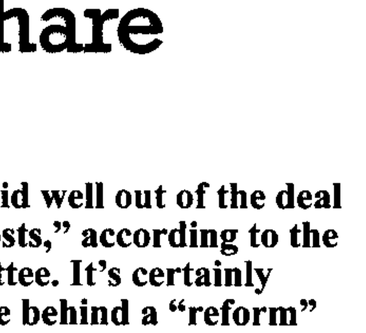
Interim chief executive **Ruth Carnall** (pictured left), now to earn £150,000 as permanent boss, is unique in that she effectively designed her own job. She was one of the management consultants who earned £2.5m for advising on the establishment of London's SHA, shortly before taking up the top job there. Carnall was previously chair of another health consultancy outfit, Verita, which sold its services to the former SW London SHA as well as NHS London. She was a non-executive director of Care UK, which *Eye* readers will know is cashing in on the new health market: recent contracts include primary care services in Barking & Dagenham and a controversial Treatment Centre on the site of the threatened King George's Hospital in Ilford. Carnall will, of course, have responsibility at NHS London for negotiating just such contracts.

Joining her in what health workers have dubbed "the nightmare team" is **Professor Paul Corrigan**, husband of Blair's chief whip Hilary Armstrong, who despite a lack of hands-on or managerial experience in the NHS becomes "director of strategy and commissioning". *Eye* readers may remember that "moderniser" Corrigan is Blair's health adviser, and was named last year by the *Health Service Journal* as the most influential individual shaping the NHS – ahead of health secretary Patricia Hewitt, rather embarrassingly. As a fundamentalist market reformer, Corrigan was a keen promoter of the foundation hospitals policy and independent treatment centres.

The new "turnaround director" is **Anthony Sumara**, who took up the post while still chief executive of the heavily indebted Hillingdon Primary Care Trust. Not everyone thinks allowing him to pick up both pay cheques is such a good idea – especially not the angry residents of Hillingdon, who wanted some straight answers from Sumara at a Patient and Public Involvement Forum in early March. When Sumara cancelled – heading for an undisclosed meeting "in London" – a luckless deputy was drafted in to take the heat.

Sumara's career since 2004 has embraced fleeting spells in top jobs at Wolverhampton Hospitals, Heart of Birmingham PCT, Shropshire and Staffordshire SHA, University Hospitals of North Staffordshire and now Hillingdon PCT – where he stirred anger with his plan to privatise almost all the PCT's services and operations, reducing staff numbers from 300 to 30. "I want to get rid of everything, outsource it – and we are distancing the PCT from its provider functions… It's commercialising, not privatising, and the public don't care," he told the *Health Service Journal*.

With this lot in charge of a growing slice of NHS London's £12.5bn budget, it would be remarkable if the private sector did not beat a path to their door. Meanwhile, over at the newly spawned London Provider Agency, who should land the top job but none other than roving NHS manager **Malcolm Stamp** (pictured right). He was at the helm when the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital Trust embarked on its ruinously expensive £220m PFI deal, which, thanks to MPs, will always be known as "the unacceptable face of capitalism".



Stamp is returning from a post in New Zealand to take up the London job. He will be joined by former health minister **Lord "Storming Norman" Warner** as the £30,000 part-time chair. Warner was instrumental in setting up the "provider" agency in the first place, so he is ideally placed to dragoon London's remaining 25 acute trusts and nine mental health trusts into seeking foundation status.

OUT-OF-HOURS GPS

Care 'n' share profits

"ONLY the doctors did well out of the deal on out-of-hours costs," according to the Public Accounts Committee. It's certainly hard to find the rationale behind a "reform" whereby doctors could abandon night cover for a few thousand quid, while the new service is worse and costs £70m more than planned.

So how come Labour made such a catastrophic mistake? Ironically, there is a good chance that doctors got their windfall from the government's long-term plan to replace them with big companies. According to the National Audit Office, around a fifth of the new out-of-hours market went to "commercial providers" – a familiar group of medical privatisers that includes Serco, Care UK and Nestor Healthcare – while the rest went to a mix of GPs' co-operatives, NHS Direct and other arrangements.

New Labour has repeatedly shown it wants to deal with companies in place of individual medical practices. Blair's health adviser, Paul Corrigan (formerly of the New Local Government Network, which gets funding from Serco) wrote a pamphlet on replacing small doctors with big companies in primary care. Last May, Blair backed a scheme for businesses to take over GP provision in six areas. Alas, only two contracts in London were signed – with Care UK and Mercury Health. The other four proposed deals fell through when the firms wanted too much money.

The government seems undeterred by failure in four of the six pilots. Labour has now announced tenders to run GP surgeries in shopping malls, and Blair has given personal backing to commercially provided GP walk-in centres at train stations – like Care UK's underperforming Newcastle scheme.

It may be that ministers and officials just prefer signing big one-off contracts – after all, it's easier being lobbied by a few rich firms than trying to deal with professional associations. But the fact that these companies, unlike GPs, give jobs to Labour politicians probably helps too. Serco, which runs the much criticised out-of-hours service in Cornwall, put Labour's Baroness Ford on its board and recruited former Labour minister Lord Filkin. Care UK, meanwhile, found a seat in its boardroom for James Strachan, partner of former Labour minister Baroness Blackstone.

MEDICINE BALLS

Desperate Remedy

THE JUNIOR doctor jobs' fiasco (*Eye* 1180) has left up to 9,000 doctors – trained with £4.5bn of public money – facing unemployment. Their pressure group, Remedy UK, has now mounted a legal challenge over the fairness of the system and issued a statement of intent to all deaneries and members of the Modernising Medical Careers committee.

This no longer includes the MMC national director, Professor Alan Crockard, who resigned because he "could not stay and watch what was happening to junior doctors, who seem to have been forgotten in the whole process". Chief medical officer Liam Donaldson has been fingered by Alex Liakos, who was a medical student advisor to MMC until he also resigned. In a letter to Sir Liam, Liakos says: "This is your project. Ultimate authority rests with you. If you continue to force through these reforms, you are a million miles away from being the 'bridge between the profession and the government' that you claim. You could not be acting more undemocratically if you tried."

Meanwhile on Planet Patsy, the health secretary fails to see a problem. Although many doctors using the MTAS application system complain that it discounts relevant clinical experience, academic achievement and references, she claims (wrongly) that full CVs "can and generally are attached", that the MTAS system "never crashed" and that no applications were lost. Quite how she can be so certain prior to her own "independent" review is unclear. Perhaps it's because the group contains only one junior doctor – and she too has resigned.

For those junior doctors lucky enough to have a job, life is hardly a bowl of cherries. Thanks to the insolvency of NHS plc, many have had funding for study leave and training courses withdrawn. Curiously, indebted trusts are still managing to cough up millions to hire management consultants such as KPMG and McKinsey, to tell them to save money by, er, cutting all funds for training.

The specialist registrars in haematology and oncology at UCLH in London are particularly irked that, in addition to their NHS duties, they are expected to cover private patients on the 15th floor for free. Last October, HCA International Ltd paid £5m to provide private in-patient bone marrow transplants and sarcoma cancer treatments at UCLH, yet none of this money is being paid to the junior staff to look after the patients. Juniors are even being denied funding for advanced life support training.

In addition, HCA paid the trust £350,000 for the exclusive use of a state of the art MRI scanner transferred from Middlesex hospital and funded by the DoH as part of the (NHS) cancer waiting list initiative. HCA employed two private radiographers to run it, but they have scanned very few patients, largely because of the surplus of private MRI facilities in central London. HCA has now pulled out its radiographers and the scanner stands idle. Meanwhile, waits for NHS MRI scans have risen since the third scanner was leased out, and disgruntled radiographers are having to work longer hours to catch up.

Equally depressing is the fact that junior staff are still running scared and frightened to blow the whistle. So, nine years into "New" Labour's NHS reforms, the wrong doctors are getting the wrong jobs, training budgets have disappeared and the climate of fear and job insecurity is more prevalent than ever. If they weren't so incompetent, you'd think it was deliberate.

M.D.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

In the City

AS POLITICAL donations are no longer supposed to be given as the reasons for peerages (no matter the truth the Dear Leader inadvertently acknowledged to Yates of the Yard), those so honoured often fly under the flag of convenience of "working peers". Busy men who will give their time to make sure the second chamber takes care of business. Just how many such paragons would make it into an all-elected House of Lords – as and when that democratic heaven arrives – remains to be seen. The stars of big business tend to prefer "managed" democracies on the Russian model rather than the tedious traditional version.

But many of those most closely linked to the parties by their chequebooks are such busy businessmen they sometimes find it difficult to do their share of the "work". Attending all those long sessions, listening to others rather than being listened to, and hanging around to vote. All very irritating when time is money – and their time is worth a lot more than the £79.50 daily pocket money doled out in attendance allowances.

The problems are even more relevant now, as a new battle looms over the right of the party in power to reward those who put and keep it there – as against having those with a say in our laws elected by those affected by them.

"Gentlemen, shall we join the bitches?"

Even if the loans-for-lordships investigation does not claim any scalps, it has finally holed below the waterline the Dear Leader's wish to preserve a system whereby cronies and paymasters are automatically made peers. But another reason should be the performance or lack of it of many of those already so honoured.

Take, for example, that old *Eye* friend and generous Tory benefactor "Lord" Michael Ashcroft of Chichester, Florida and Belize. Following much pressure from the grateful Tories he was finally granted a peerage, after one embarrassing knock-back, in 2000. A condition was that he have a home in Britain and be resident for UK tax purposes (at least on the income he earned or remitted here, which was probably not too painful).

"Of course I recognise that as a working peer you have to work. You cannot be a working peer sitting in another country," Ashcroft told the *Sunday Torygraph* in April 2000, soon after receiving the good news.

But despite having a home a short walk away, Lords attendance records show that Ashcroft might just as well have been living across the Atlantic. In his first session as a peer he attended on 15 out of a maximum 25 occasions. But the novelty soon wore off. The next year it was 24 out of 76, then in 2001-2 a mere 42 out of 200 followed by 42 out of 174 in 2002-3 and an embarrassing 26 out of a possible 157 occasions in 2003-4. For the truncated period of November 2004 to April 2005 there was a hardly impressive 12 attendances out of a possible 63. And the latest figures to November 2006 show a mere 71 attendances out of a possible 206.

So "working peer" Lord Ashcroft managed a grand total of 232 attendances out of a maximum 896, or 26 percent, over six years. The Ashcroft voting record is even worse: just 149 votes out of a possible 929, or 16 percent. Last year, he was more active – 48 votes out of 186.

The performance of another ever-open wallet for the Tories, the more recent appointment Irvine Laidlaw, is also open to criticism. Like Ashcroft he too had to come onshore to claim his peerage in 2004 from his long-time base in Monaco, with a similar UK tax residence requirement for whatever part of his income he volunteered.

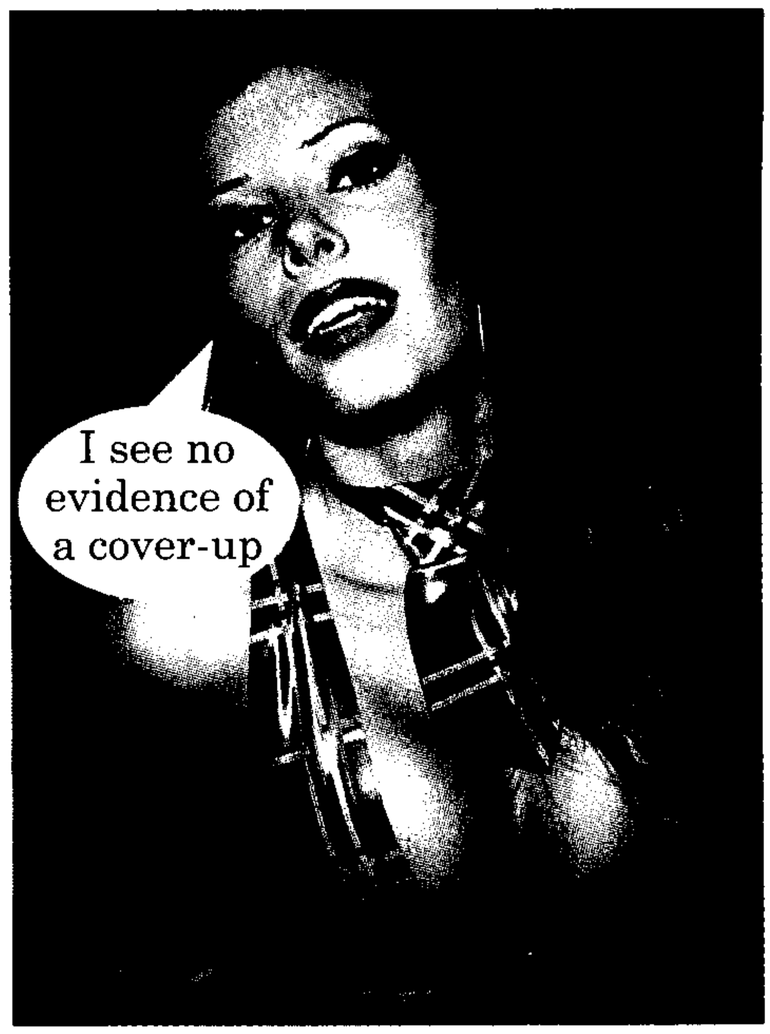
In 2003-4, the new Lord Laidlaw honoured his fellow peers with his presence on 25 of 57 possible occasions. But the next abbreviated 2004-5 session saw him bother only 22 times out of 63. For 2005-2006 he attended just 34 out of 206 sessions. So he has managed to turn up just 81 times out of a possible 326 – only one in four Lords sessions over three years. The Laidlaw voting record stands at 59 out of a possible 338 divisions, or 17 percent. He voted on just 25 of 186 occasions last year.

No doubt all this will change as and when the Tories return to power, backed by the Laidlaw and Ashcroft millions. But it is doubtful meanwhile if the Conservatives are concerned or critical. Both peers have outstanding loans of £3.5m or more to the party, on generous terms. The Ashcroft loan is from a British Virgin Islands company!

Doubtless both men were always there for the votes that counted. Also, unlike many of the political deadbeats and party hacks who have been given a Lords pass since 1997, they manifestly do not need the money – in addition to the daily attendance allowance there is an overnight allowance of £159.50.

There are other much rarer sightings on the Labour side. The great architect Lord Rogers attended just once in 2005-6. Other busy Labour nominees, such as milords Renwick (7), Hollick (22), and Grabiner (30), were also among the least frequent attendees. But then former Labour

BAE SYSTEMS 'SLUSH FUND' PAID FOR PARTY GIRLS TO ENTERTAIN SAUDI PRINCES



politicians (a different category to the businessmen "working" peers) such as Lord Roy Hattersley did not bother to attend at all, raising the question of why, other than for the title, he accepted the peerage in the first place.

Lord Michael Heseltine was a similar Tory no-show along with Jeffrey Archer, Lords Deedes, Black, Wolfson of Sunningdale, and Blyth. Occasional visitors were Lords Seb "Olympics" Coe (2), Andrew Lloyd-Webber (4), Peter Levene (13), and major donor Philip Harris of Peckham (22).

Lords Ashcroft and Laidlaw's record was superior to all these and they can also justifiably point to the record of Labour's chief fundraiser, Lord "Cashpoint" Michael Levy, who only managed to attend around a quarter of the Lords sessions between 1997 and 2006, with a similar voting record. Levy attended just 62 of 206 sessions in 2005-6 and voted in 30 of 186 divisions. But then he was busy bringing peace to the Middle East as well as raising money for Labour. And for the past year doubtless he, like Conrad Black, has had to see more of his lawyers and the men from the Yard than his fellow Labour cronies in the Lords. For once, perhaps he wished it had been the other way round.

DAILY TORYGRAPH editor at large Jeff Randall pulled no punches in his BBC *Money Programme* profile of Conrad Black last month. His final verdict on his former employer and paymaster: "I think he was an arrogant man whose biggest mistake was to surround himself with 'yes' men. There was no one to rein him back. No one to say, 'no'."

Quite so. But among those to be found in the Canadian tycoon's Hallelujah chorus – despite maintaining that his initial reaction when Black bought the *Torygraph* was caution – was none other than a certain Mr J. Randall.

And so it continued. Consider this report in the *Sunday Times* in April 1994 about a row between Black and the former Australian Labour prime minister Bob Hawke: "It boils down to whom do you believe. My money would be on Black every time."

In April 1995, revealing that Richard Branson had turned down a chance to join the *Telegraph* board, Randall enthused that it was "replete with City and political luminaries". No

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

"Well, that's practically an invitation to thieves"

mention of "yes" men there.

A year later, when Black moved to counter City criticism of his decision to launch a price war shortly after floating the *Telegraph* group by offering to buy back shares, Randall's verdict was: "Black mark erased."

Time moved on and "J.R.", now the BBC's business editor, became a star columnist for the still Black-owned *Sunday Tel*. In March 2004, as Hollinger shareholders increased the pressure that forced Black to sell the Telegraph group to the Barclay brothers (who hired Randall, having employed him at *Sunday Business*), he fearlessly reported from Toronto on the crisis: "Lest cynics suspect a conflict of interest, let me remind you that Lord Black, despite mounting personal difficulties, remains the *Sunday Telegraph*'s controlling shareholder. Whatever Black's alleged wrongdoings, his creation of the *National Post* has made a valuable contribution to Canada's cultural fabric. Its columnists and leader writers have helped develop a more balanced political arena, dragging the debate to the right, away from the pro-statist, liberal consensus that dominates Canada's media. As in Britain, there's nothing journalists here like more than reporting on their own industry. Thus Black's woes have been allotted acres of coverage, much of it laced with schadenfreude."

That's how to rein in a tycoon.

PANIC is gripping the vital trust management sector in Jersey and elsewhere in the UK tax havens. The cause? A little noticed change in the rules that came into effect last week regarding which trustees are, and which are not, UK-resident for tax purposes.

The tax avoidance industry relies on offshore trusts, and offshore trusts rely on non-resident trustees to protect the assets of UK beneficiaries. Otherwise assets held offshore can still be taxed in the UK, especially if the beneficiaries or settlers of the trusts are there.

The Finance Act 2006 introduced a new test for the UK tax residence of trustees, which caught any trustee whose business had a "branch, agency or permanent establishment" in the UK. This has freaked out those many trust companies, lawyers and accountants in the septic isles of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man who have UK branches, use the London offices of their parent companies or are given back office support onshore. These could be seen as "permanent establishments", thereby making a corporate trustee UK-resident, and conveying UK taxability on any trust where it was a trustee.

Revenue & Customs have refused to reassure the trust industry by clarifying exactly who will be caught and why before the new rules took effect on April 6. As a result, several trustees have started taking defensive measures such as severing links with onshore parent companies or partnerships by resigning directorships so as to keep their offshore trust companies "clean"!

Those who have not taken avoidance tactics could be in for a very expensive surprise, as many of the family and discretionary trusts which benefit Britain's old and new money rely on corporate trustees in Jersey, who have in the past operated in and through London offices.

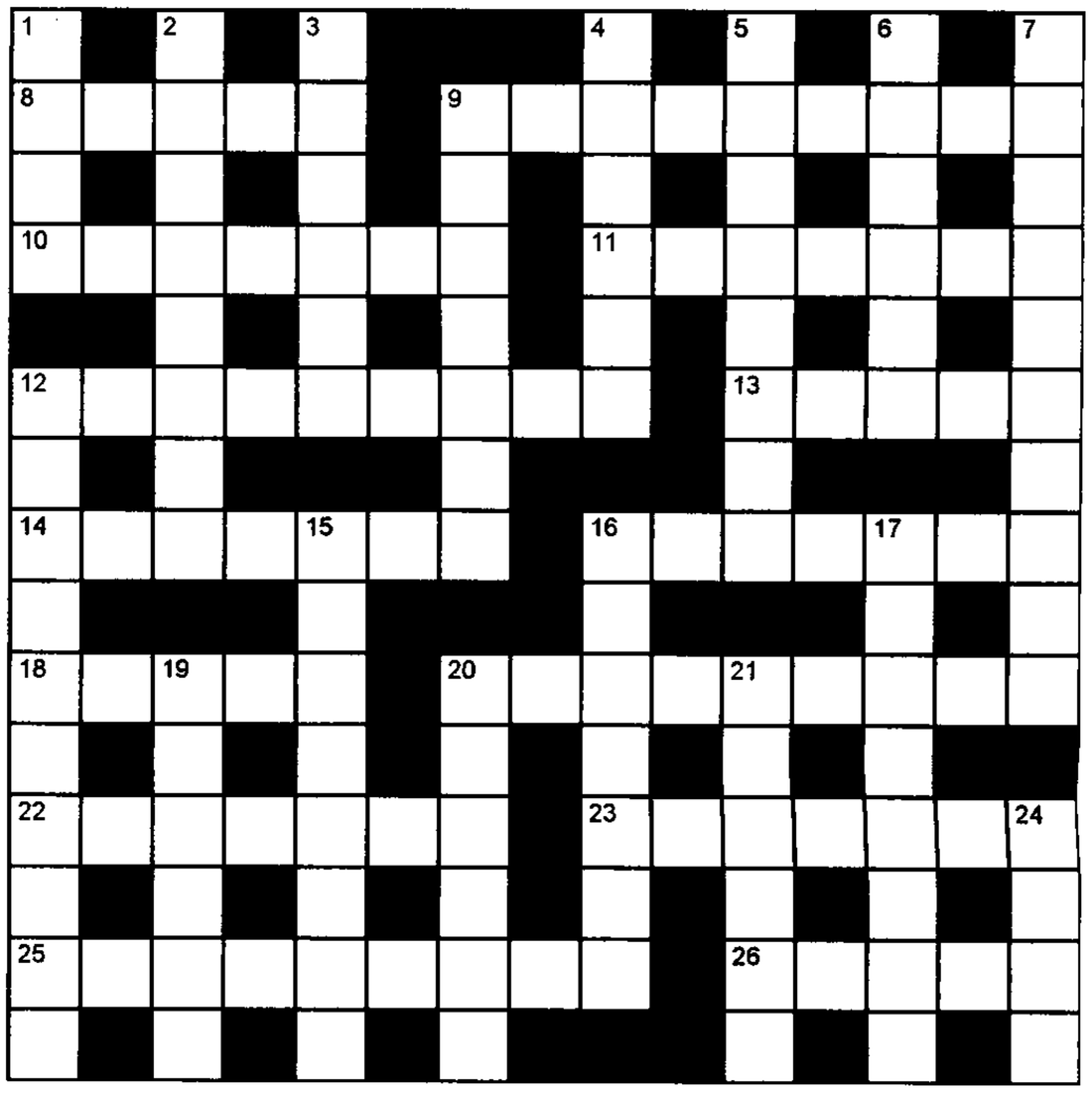
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 337

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 20 April 2007

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

8 Overweight Prescott's main protuberance (5)
9 Is not commonly inserted in soft testicle for pseudo-military sport (9)
10/20ac. Turn up with tossers like Jeffrey Archer, politically – and one of his fictional creations? (4,3,4,5)
11 Pretend drug gets to fix stinking problem (7)
12 Not warmonger Bush's favourite puff (5,4)
13 Cyclops, given drink, totally flips – it's symbolic (5)
14 Bollocks follow such a sturdy pet? (7)
16 Political dissenters: "F*** doing anything!" (7)
18 A religion demonstrates "Cyclops rubbish!" (5)
20 See 10ac.
22 Muslim's take on Christian working in deli taking in female? (7)
23 The ones concealing criminal charge get the treatment (7)
25 One getting stuck into pisspoor, pushy twat endlessly seen on the box? (4,3,2)
26 Desert Frenchman's main word for "sex" (5)

DOWN

1 Fuel exporters 'ave confidence on taking cocaine (4)
2 Local creep and piss-artist's perambulations (3,5)
3 In the process of screwing someone you've taken out? Change to the latest version (6)
4 Spot the solicitor with foreign article (6)
5 Beginnings of anti terror legislation stunt (double-crossed on return flight from UK to US) (8)
6 Act as if you've come to please a man (4,2)
7 Gore ready to provide the assassin's reward? (5,5)
9 Tart re-applying dung dip (7)
12 Rotary club is pits for the likes of Max Clifford (10)
15 Assume your audience is thick, inarticulate and depressed (4,4)
16 Smooth writer groped breast – time to be usurped by Penny (4-3)
17 Got up Princess Royal, roughly around end of night (excessive reverence) (8)
19 Feel bad about sticking it up Dave Spart? (6)
20 Henry and co. plotted to get head from her? "Only be kinky" (6)
21 Set about getting woman hot and damp (6)
24 Abominable sort of *Eye* tip: "ignore *Express* political leaders" (4)

Crossword 336 winner: JULIET MOLLOY

ACROSS: 6 Vacuum 7 Ofsted 11/9 Photo opportunity 12 Richard II 13 Optical 14 Piss off 16/20 Des res 17 Typhus 19 Stoker 22 Nightie 23 On leave 25 Teardrops 27 Moron 28 Plug in 29 Annual.

DOWN: 1 Galoot 2/15 Out of court settlement 3 Emerald 4 Forceps 5 Headlock 8/26 Sea dog 10 Air Force One 18 Pigtails 20 Recount 21 Sods law 24 Airbag.

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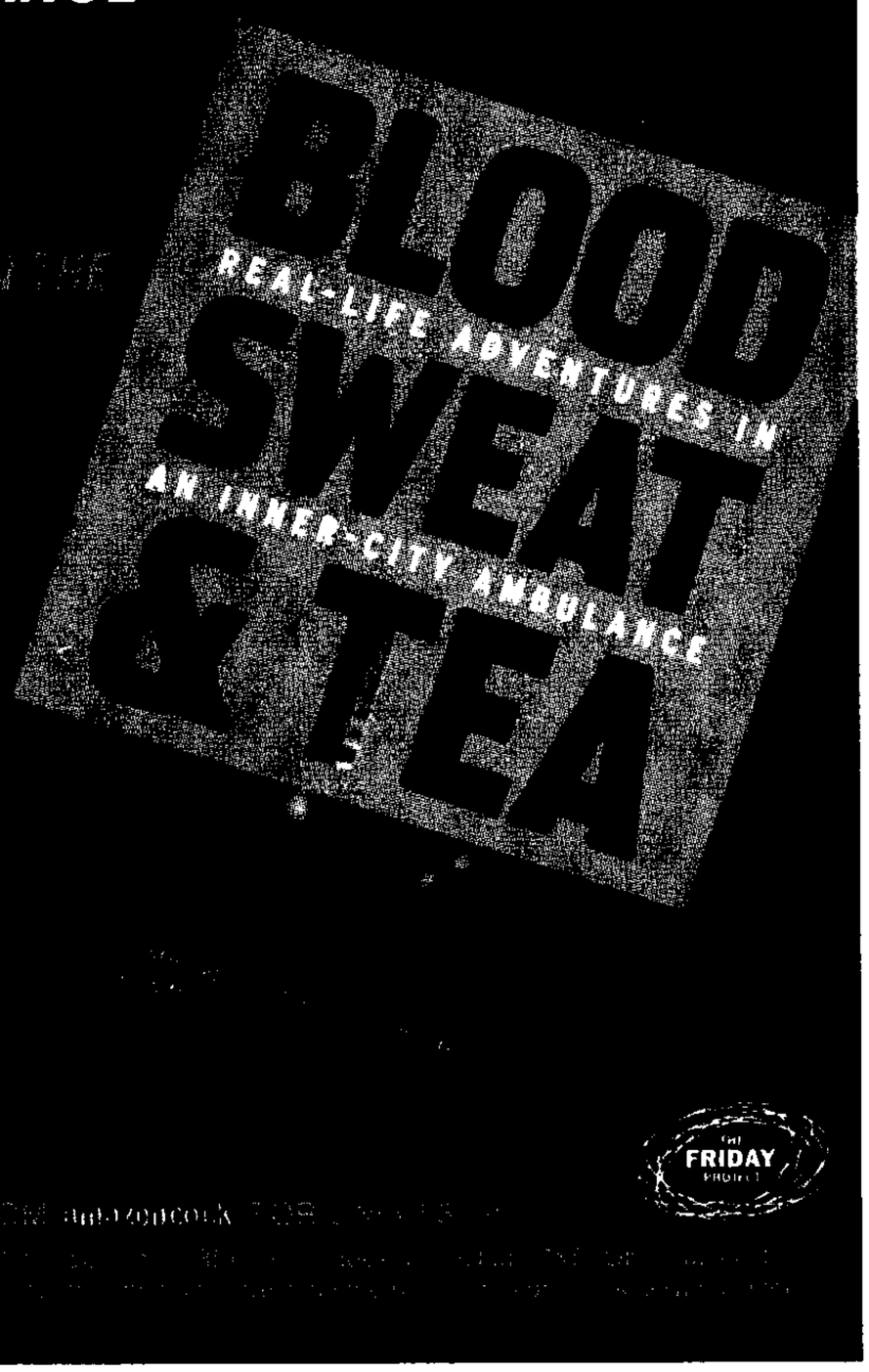

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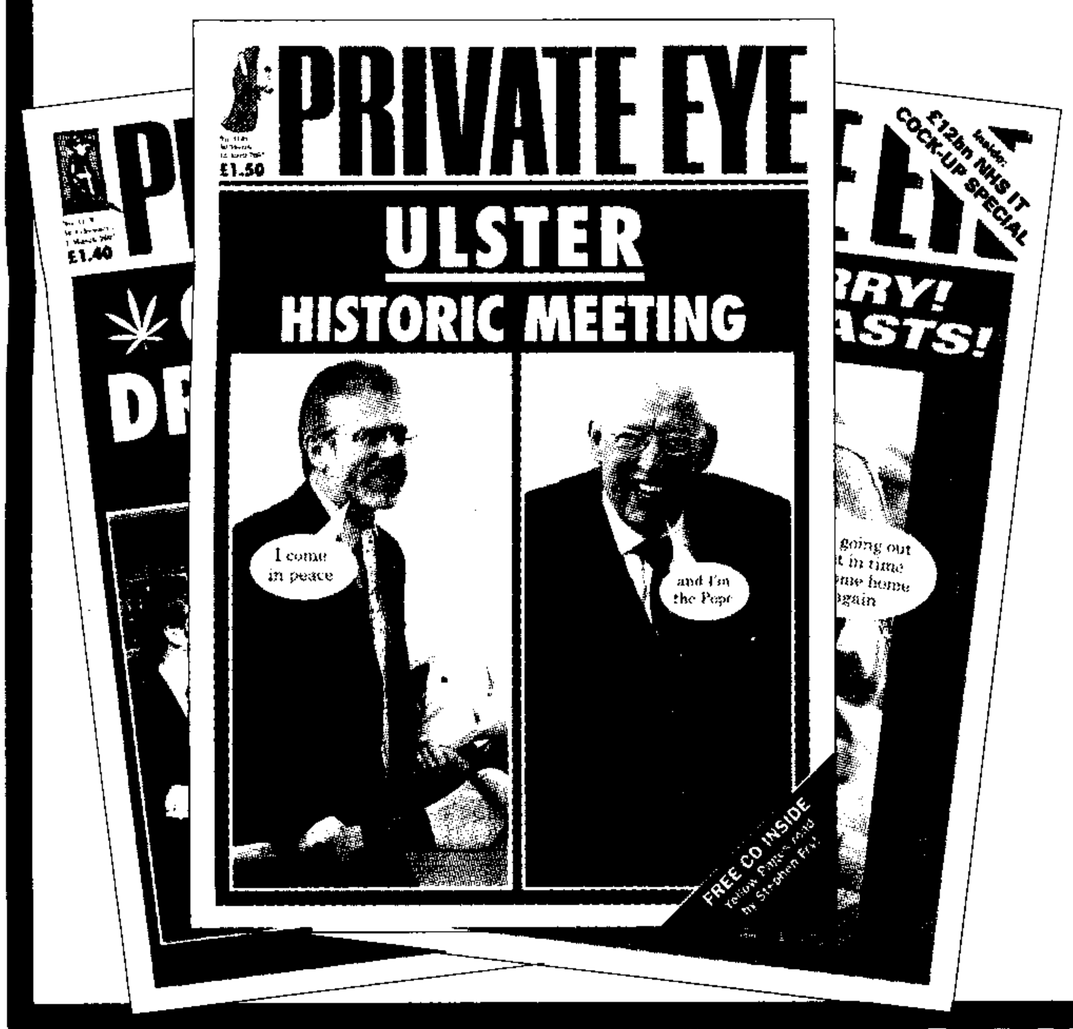

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OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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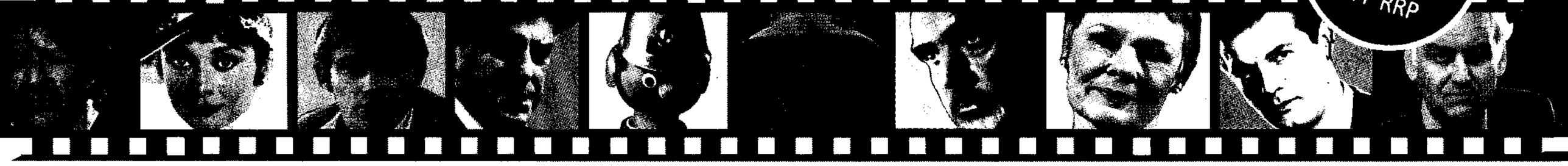

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22186	**One Foot in the Grave** Series 1-6 (12)	~~£69.99~~	**£48.49**	£21.50
72298	**Outside Edge** Series 1 (PG)	~~£14.99~~	**£6.97**	£8.02
74658	**Outside Edge** Series 2 (12)	~~£19.99~~	**£7.99**	£12.00
60460	**The Good Life** Series 1 (PG)	~~£24.99~~	**£17.98**	£7.01
22212	**The Likely Lads Collection** Series 1-3 (PG)	~~£34.99~~	**£24.99**	£10.00
30104	**Whatever Happened/Likely Lads** Series 1 (12)	~~£15.99~~	**£11.98**	£4.01
30103	**Whatever Happened/Likely Lads** Series 2 (12)	~~£15.99~~	**£11.98**	£4.01
32207	**Complete Yes Minister/Prime Minister** (PG)	~~£49.99~~	**£36.99**	£13.00
62001	**Yes Prime Minister** Series 1 (U)	~~£12.99~~	**£7.97**	£5.02
30106	**Yes Prime Minister** Series 2 (PG)	~~£12.99~~	**£7.97**	£5.02

TV Period Dramas

Code		RRP	Price	Save
71791	**BBC Barchester Chronicles** (U)	~~£24.99~~	**£11.98**	£13.01
35016	**BBC Jane Eyre** (Toby Stephens) (PG) **NEW**	~~£24.99~~	**£16.97**	£8.02
70627	**All Creatures Great & Small** Series 1 (PG)	~~£49.99~~	**£34.99**	£15.00
70628	**All Creatures Great & Small** Series 2 (PG)	~~£49.99~~	**£39.99**	£10.00
31973	**All Creatures Great & Small** Series 3 (PG)	~~£24.99~~	**£16.98**	£8.01
31974	**All Creatures Great & Small** Series 4 (PG)	~~£24.99~~	**£16.99**	£8.00
24647	**An Ungentlemanly Act** (15)	~~£5.99~~	**£4.48**	£1.51
72604	**BBC Dickens** 8 adaptations (12)	~~£99.99~~	**£59.99**	£40.00
71752	**BBC Oscar Wilde** Collection (12)	~~£24.99~~	**£17.99**	£7.00
73136	**BBC Pride & Prejudice** (Firth) (U)	~~£19.99~~	**£11.89**	£8.10
24184	**BBC Trollope Set** 3 adaptations (12)	~~£59.99~~	**£48.97**	£11.02
72433	**Brideshead Revisited** (15)	~~£39.99~~	**£20.97**	£19.02
30646	**Catherine Cookson** Complete (15)	~~£119.99~~	**£89.98**	£30.01
31987	**Catherine Cookson** Birth, Death, Love (12)	~~£39.99~~	**£29.98**	£10.01
31981	**Catherine Cookson** Rags to Riches (15)	~~£39.99~~	**£29.98**	£10.01
31982	**Catherine Cookson** Secrets and Lies (15)	~~£39.99~~	**£29.98**	£10.01
71526	**Danger UXB** Complete (12)	~~£29.99~~	**£22.49**	£7.50
31885	**Elizabeth I** (Mirren) (15)	~~£19.99~~	**£5.99**	£14.00
31994	**A Family at War** Series 1-3 (12)	~~£149.99~~	**£69.99**	£80.00
30046	**Flambards** Complete (12)	~~£39.99~~	**£16.99**	£13.00
73171	**Fortunes of War** (15)	~~£29.99~~	**£15.89**	£14.10
61216	**Hornblower** Episodes 1-8 (12)	~~£59.99~~	**£50.99**	£9.00
70565	**Horseman Riding By** Box Set (U)	~~£59.99~~	**£44.99**	£15.00
72031	**I Claudius** (Jacobi) Box Set (15)	~~£44.99~~	**£27.97**	£17.02
31998	**Irish RM Complete** Series 1-3 (PG)	~~£59.99~~	**£26.99**	£33.00
24642	**Lillie** (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£17.99**	£12.00
30052	**My Family & Other Animals** (PG)	~~£19.99~~	**£13.99**	£6.00
71662	**North & South** Series 1 (US Civil War) (15)	~~£31.99~~	**£13.97**	£21.02
71663	**North & South** Series 2 (US Civil War) (15)	~~£34.99~~	**£11.99**	£23.00
32918	**Penmarric** Complete (PG) **NEW**	~~£29.99~~	**£17.99**	£12.00
24303	**Piece of Cake** (12)	~~£16.99~~	**£12.99**	£4.00
70593	**Poldark** Series 1 (PG)	~~£34.99~~	**£26.99**	£8.00
70595	**Poldark** Series 2 (PG)	~~£34.99~~	**£10.49**	£24.50
30007	**Rome** Series 1 (15)	~~£49.99~~	**£32.99**	£17.00
71680	**Sam** Series 1 (PG)	~~£59.99~~	**£41.91**	£18.08
71688	**Sam** Series 2 (PG)	~~£59.99~~	**£41.91**	£18.08
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73571	**Coast / Picture of Britain** Box Set	~~£49.99~~	**£12.99**	£27.00
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24485	**Planet Earth**	~~£39.99~~	**£24.97**	£15.02

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32984	**Hotel Babylon** Series 1 (15) **NEW**	~~£29.99~~	**£16.99**	£13.00
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24755	**Tom & Jerry** Volumes 4, 5 & 6 (U)	~~£41.97~~	**£13.99**	£27.98
70369	**Band of Brothers** (15)	~~£59.99~~	**£27.99**	£32.00
32142	**Beatrix Potter Box Set** (U)	~~£24.99~~	**£17.98**	£7.01
32144	**Tales of Beatrix Potter** Royal Ballet (U)	~~£12.99~~	**£6.97**	£5.02
32139	**Bonanza Double Bill** 31 episodes (PG)	~~£24.99~~	**£17.99**	£7.00
74663	**Coming Home/Nancherrow** (12)	~~£29.99~~	**£22.49**	£7.50
70912	**Dallas** Series 1&2 (12)	~~£49.99~~	**£15.99**	£34.00
24574	**Dallas** Series 3 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£13.99**	£26.00
62959	**Darling Buds of May** Series 1-3 (PG)	~~£39.99~~	**£17.99**	£22.00
74040	**Hop-a-long-Cassidy** 52 episodes (U)	~~£39.99~~	**£25.99**	£14.00
72840	**Howard's Way** Series 1 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£14.98**	£15.01
73524	**Howard's Way** Series 2 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£14.99**	£15.00
24466	**Howard's Way** Series 3 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£17.99**	£11.00
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73250	**Kung Fu** Series 2 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£9.99**	£20.00
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61494	**Lovejoy Complete** Series 1-6 (PG)	~~£149.99~~	**£112.49**	£37.50
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74616	**The Waltons** Season 2 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£13.99**	£16.00
32511	**The Waltons** Season 3 (15)	~~£29.99~~	**£24.59**	£15.40
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74558	**Upstairs Downstairs** Series 3 (12)	~~£29.99~~	**£16.97**	£13.02
32485	**Upstairs Downstairs** Series 4 (PG)	~~£29.99~~	**£25.49**	£4.50
31980	**Upstairs Downstairs** Series 1-5 (12)	~~£129.99~~	**£103.98**	£26.01
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NHS PULLED MSc FUNDING. Too brunette for sugar daddies, not devious enough for bank robbery, work too late for prostitution. £35 buys textbook, £4500 an MSc. S/C: 20-08-44. A/C: 00877247.

POET. MY SOUL or my flat? S/C: 20-92-08. A/C: 50557153. vincelaws@hotmail.com

REDUNDANCY, then broken back; solvency to BIG debt in 12 months - 2006 not vintage! £10K or part would really make 2007. Thank you. Ing, S/C: 40-61-98. A/C: 14924534. Email: annieab@btinternet.com

URGENTLY NEED £30 to pay for this silly ad. S/C: 30-93-03. A/C: 07012401.

25-YEAR-OLD FEMALE DOCTOR disillusioned with NHS (they quashed my dreams). Desperately want to study Masters in Infection and then save lives in Developing Countries. Can't afford course costs of £8,000 as owe £40,000 in student loans. Any financial assistance gratefully accepted. Please help! S/C: 20-71-06. A/C: 20298026.

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HELP. NEW JOB/LIFE: require £3000 to relocate. S/C: 07-00-30. A/C: 55095357.

WALKED AWAY FROM old life, retraining, struggling. Any help gratefully appreciated. S/C: 14-17-10. A/C: 32056542.

PLEASE HELP ME HELP OTHERS! £2,800 needed for MS sponsored walk dream. All contributions appreciated. BARCLAYS, S/C: 20-97-09. A/C: 00122920.

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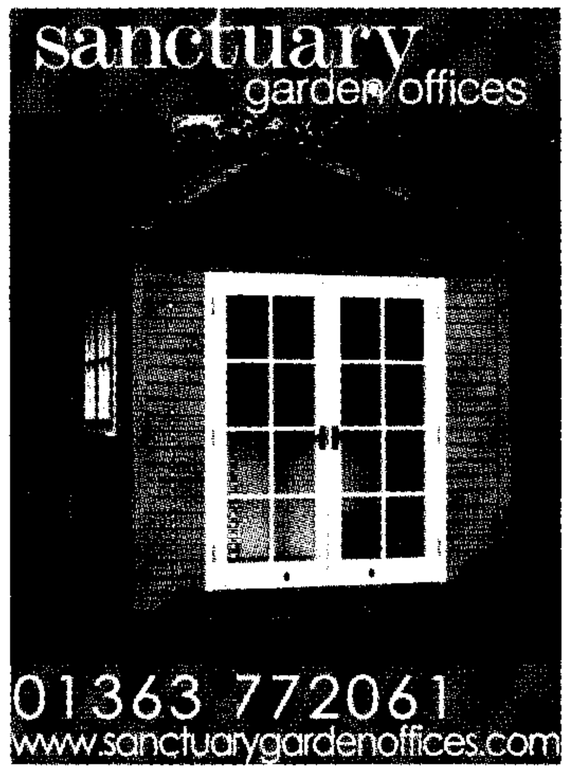

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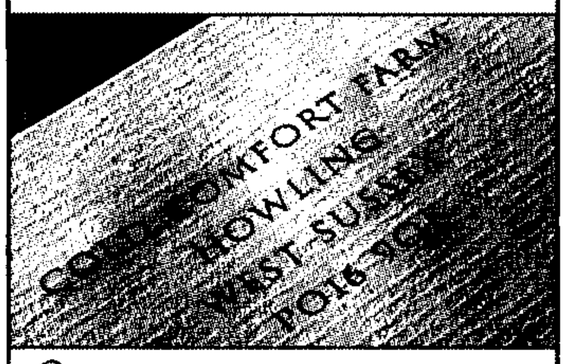

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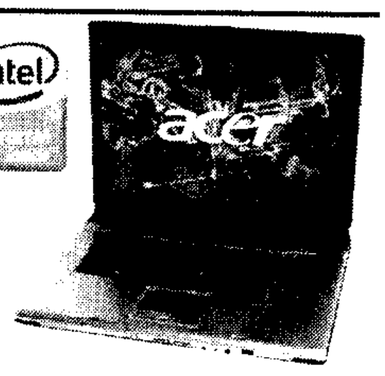

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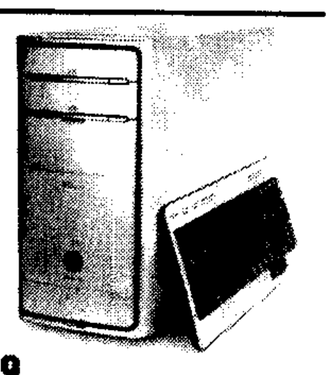

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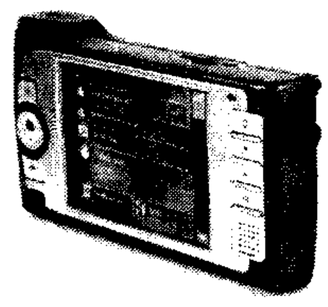

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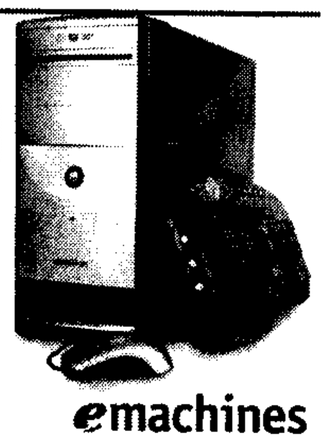

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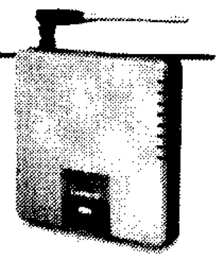

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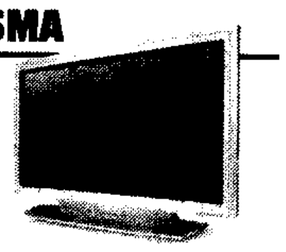

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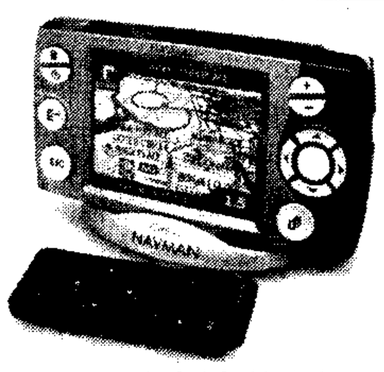

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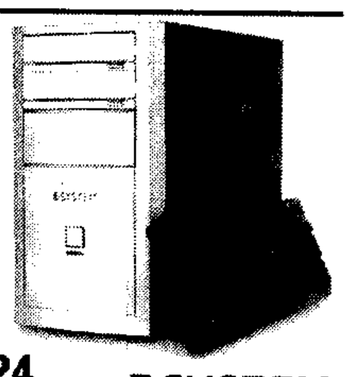

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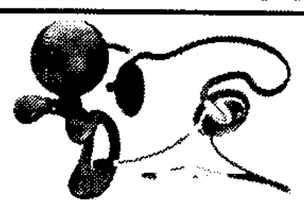

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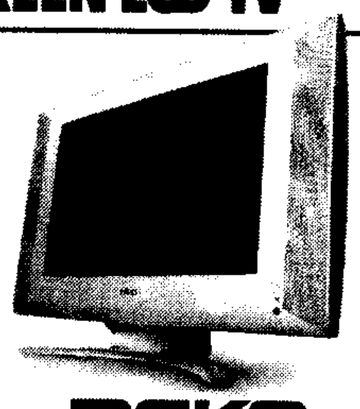

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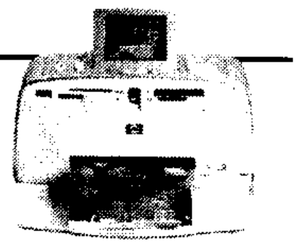

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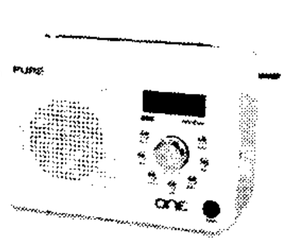

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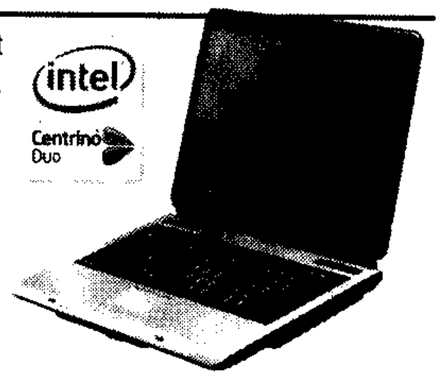

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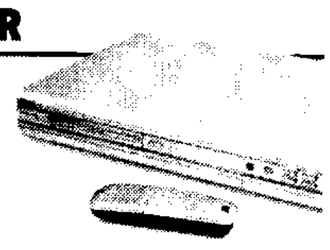

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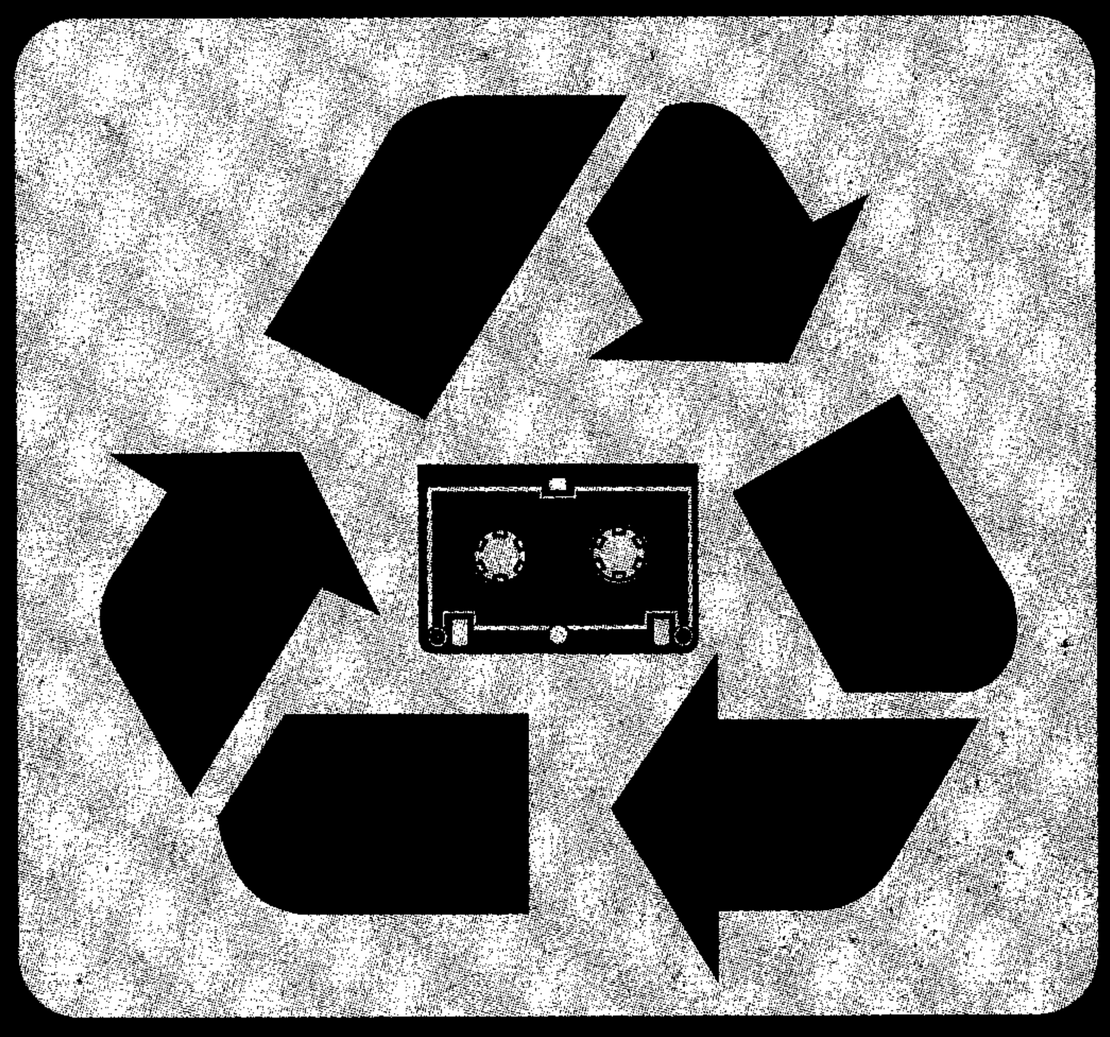

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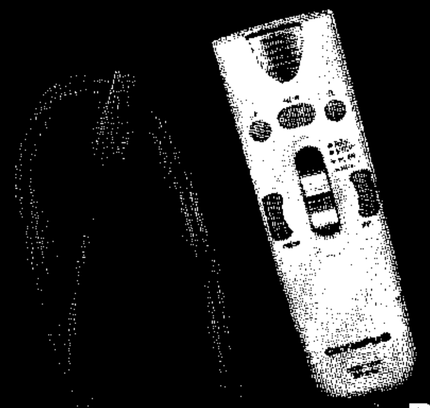
AS-4000

DS-4000


DR-2000

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